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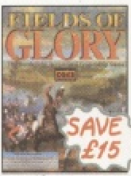

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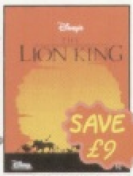

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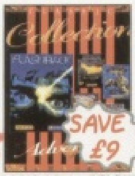

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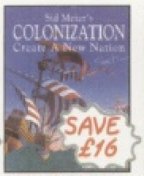

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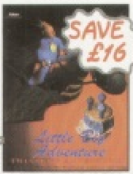

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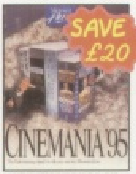

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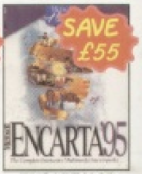

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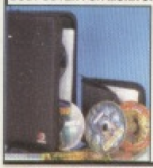

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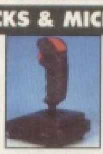

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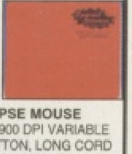

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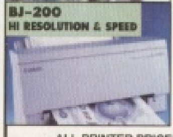

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Life — sniff! — just isn't fair. This month PC GAMES has been crushed beneath an unprecedented avalanche of absolutely brilliant games, so of course I had to come down with a particularly nasty flu-bug. So, while Dean and Alex were back in the office enjoying the sublime delights of games like Descent, Psycho Pinball, UFO: Terror From The Deep and, er, Premier Manager 3, I was lying in bed at home, coughing a lot, sweating like a pig and being slightly pathetic.

And, to make matters worse, this was the month we got LucasArts' Dark Forces in for review. Every time I rang the office from my death bed to see how things were going, all I could hear in the background was the sound of laser blasts and Stormtrooper chatter. Being the Star Wars saddo that I am, you can imagine my frustration at not being able to play too...

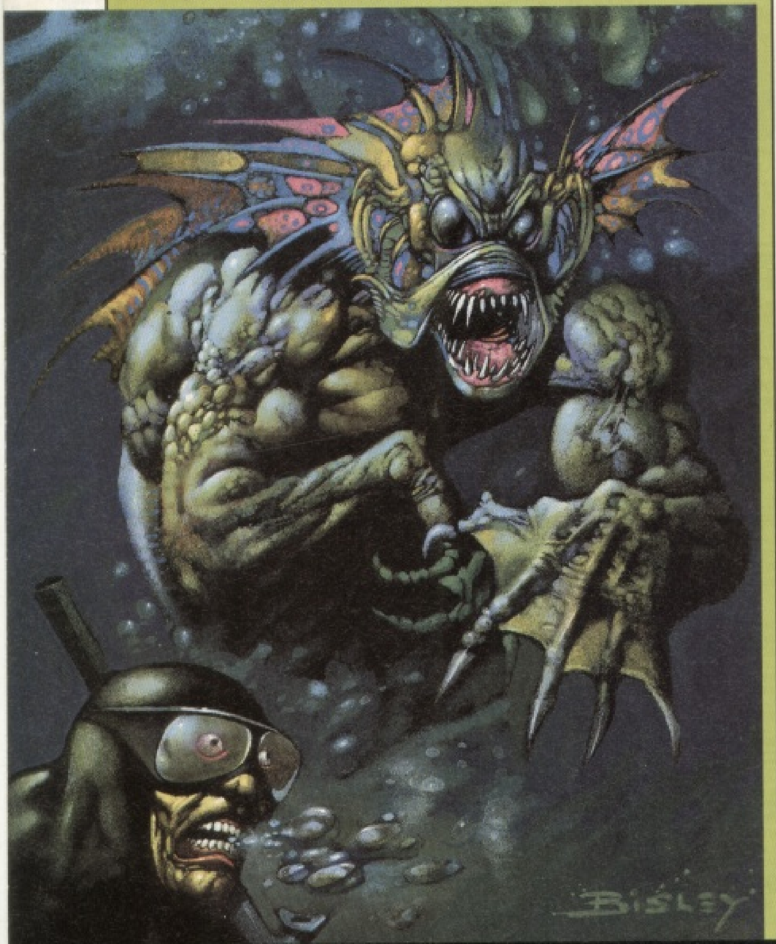
Anyway, I'm better now — and what better way to get back into the swing of things than by reviewing top-quality fare like Space Ace... Hmmm, perhaps I should've stayed in bed.

Good health to you all — enjoy the issue!

David Upchurch,
Editor.

UFO: Terror From The Deep..40

Actually, it's not called UFO any more — it's called X-COM. And the aliens no longer come from outer space, they come from the darkest depths of the oceans. What on Earth is going on? All is revealed in our — yes! — EXCLUSIVE first review!



6 Disks!

Stop! Don't even *think* about putting your cover-mounted HDs or CD in your PC until you've read this!

12 News

Once again PC GAMES' team of expert news-hounds have gone through the bins of the world's software companies to bring you this gaggle of top scoops.

WIN!

A brill quad-speed CD-ROM drive, thanks to Microprose! Turn to page 21 NOW!

23 Previews

Resident 'lucky sod' Dean jetted all the way over to the States to take an early peek at what MicroProse has up its sleeve for the coming year, while Dave and Alex contented themselves with more home-grown fare, including Gremlin's Slipstream 5000, Domark's Tank Commander and AdventureSoft's Simon The Sorcerer 2.

39 Reviews

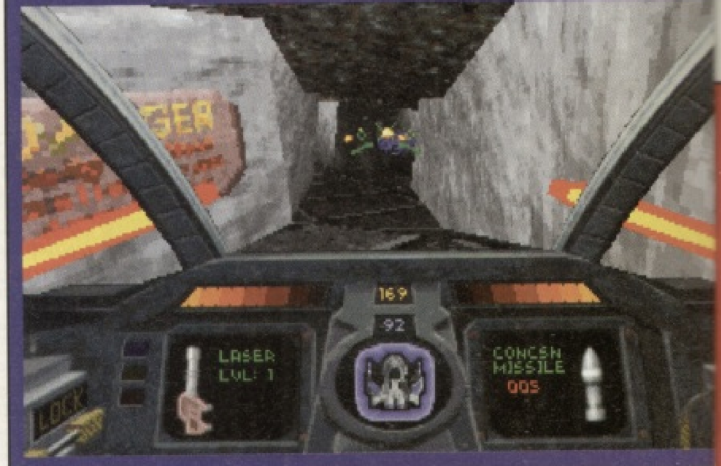
According to the experts (i.e. us), April 1995 could well go down in software history as the best month ever for hot new releases — and with titles like UFO: Terror From The Deep, Dark Forces, Descent, Premier Manager 3, Psycho Pinball and many more under the spotlight, who could disagree with them?

72 CD Updates

As well as taking a look at all the latest multimedia upgrades, we've once again bent the rules a little bit this month by including another data disk review in this section. Are we naughty or what? Giggle.

Descent....................................46

Interplay have taken Doom's 3D shoot-'em-up gameplay and given it a whole new dimension — literally! Ah, but does it work...?



74 Budget Reviews

Five new cheapo re-releases are given a good massage and an all-over body check by PC GAMES' budget-meister, Alex Simmons.

76 Back Issues

Yes — here's your chance to complete your PC GAMES collection!

78 Power Up!

If our tips were any more up-to-the-minute, we'd be printing solutions to games that haven't even been written yet. Take this month, for example, which offers copious help for gamers stuck in King's Quest VII, Cyberia, Retribution and, of course, dear old System Shock.

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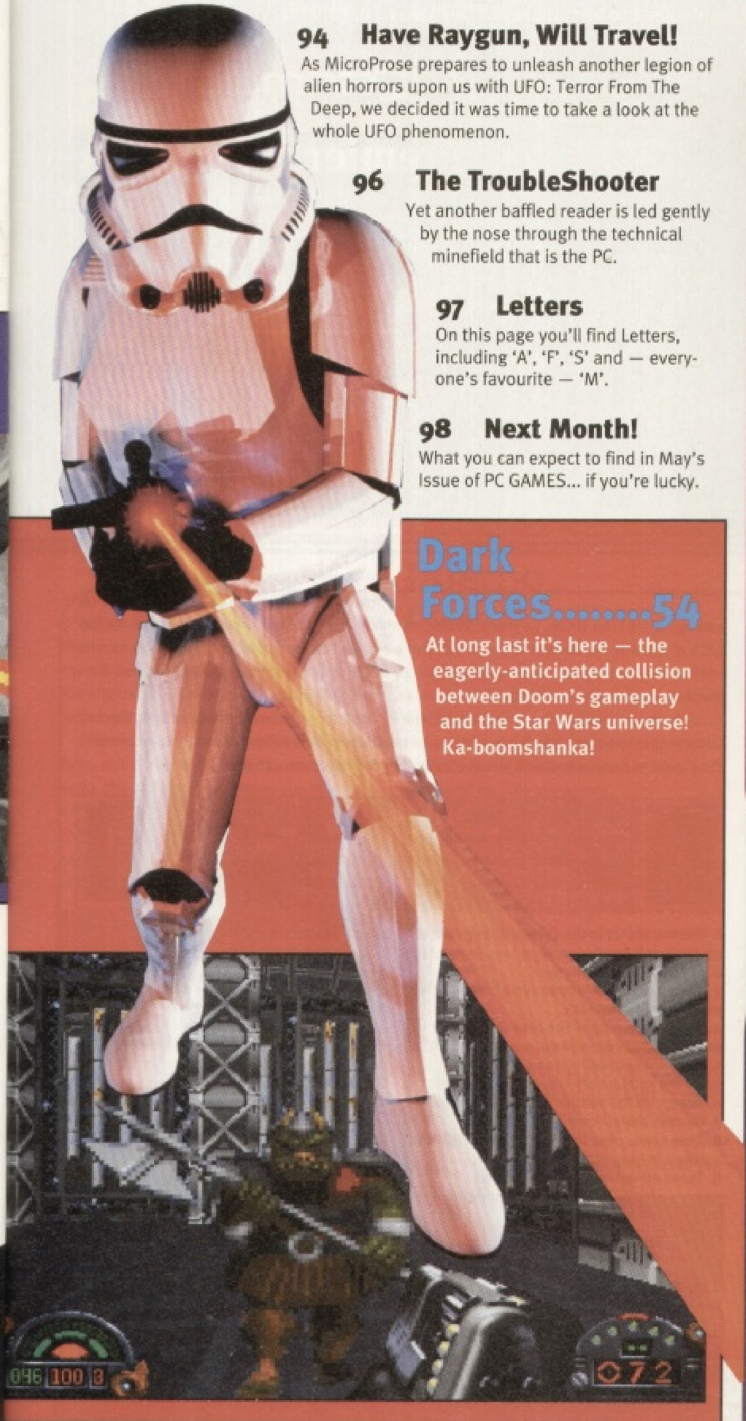

94 Have Raygun, Will Travel!
As MicroProse prepares to unleash another legion of alien horrors upon us with UFO: Terror From The Deep, we decided it was time to take a look at the whole UFO phenomenon.

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97 Letters
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At long last it's here — the eagerly-anticipated collision between Doom's gameplay and the Star Wars universe! Ka-boomshanka!

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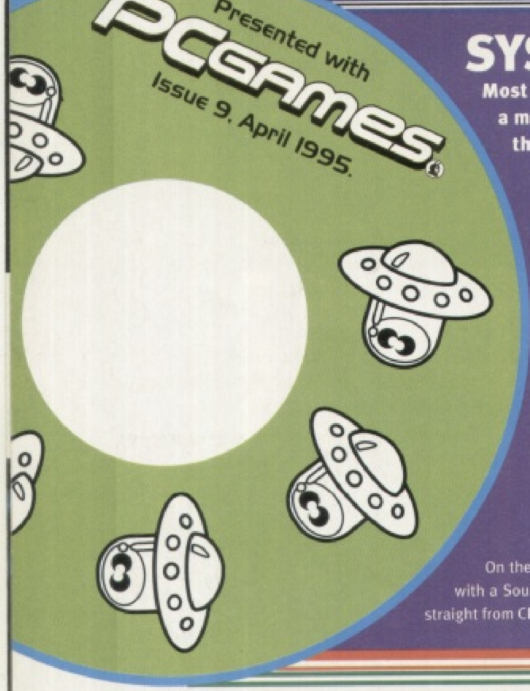
Disks!

Once again our disks and CD are full-to-bursting with fully-playable excellence — including a totally exclusive UFO: Terror From The Deep demo! Blimey, can you handle the excitement?

DISKS!

Please take care as you sample this month's mouth-watering demo delights. We reckon they're so good, some of you suffering from a weak constitution might explode. Or something. If they get any better — if that's possible — we'll probably have to slap a Government health warning on the cover.



SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Most of these demos will run on a 386 PC (minimum), with VGA, at least 4Mb of RAM, DOS 5.0 or greater and a mouse. However, please note that both Dark Forces and Wings Of Glory require at least 8Mb of RAM, and that Xplora 1 and Secrets Of Stargate need to be run under Windows 3.1 or greater.

PCGAMES

Requires 256-colour VGA, 4Mb of RAM and DOS 5.0; 386 PC minimum.

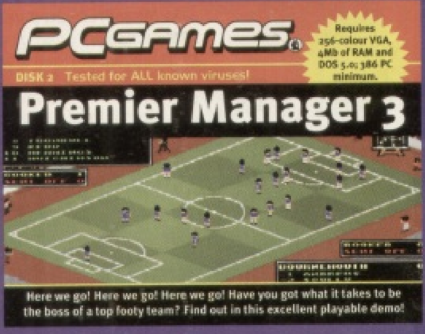
DISK 1 Tested for ALL known viruses!

EXCLUSIVE!

UFO

Terror From The Deep

Take control of the PC GAMES crew as they battle sub-aquatic aliens in this fab playable demo!



PCGAMES

Requires 256-colour VGA, 4Mb of RAM and DOS 5.0; 386 PC minimum.

DISK 2 Tested for ALL known viruses!

Premier Manager 3

Here we go! Here we go! Here we go! Have you got what it takes to be the boss of a top footy team? Find out in this excellent playable demo!

Install Or Run?

On the CoverCD, you'll find that you can either install or run most of the demos featured. All of the demos on our disk are configured to run with a Sound Blaster or 100%-compatible card set at Port 220, IRQ 7, low DMA 1 and high DMA 5. If you have this, then you can run the demos straight from CD. If you haven't, then install the demo onto your hard drive and use the sound set-up programs to configure the game to your system.

UFO: Terror From The Deep

MicroProse

The aliens are back — and this time they've got snorkels! Here's your chance to sample the sublime delights of MicroProse's PC GAMES STAR-rated super-sequel in this fully-playable — and needless to say EXCLUSIVE — demo.

Loading The Game...

...From The HD Disks

Pop Disk 1 in your machine's internal drive, log onto it and then enter **PCG** to run the installer. If you're happy with the settings, press **RETURN** to install the demo to your hard drive.

...From The CoverCD

Place the CoverCD in your CD-ROM drive, long onto it and then type **PCG** to run the CoverCD menu. Use the cursor keys to select UFO:TFTD and hit **RETURN** to install the game onto your hard drive.

How To Play

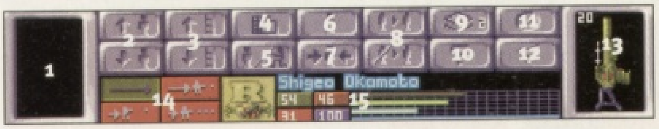
This demo is controlled using the mouse, so make sure you have a driver installed. Once the demo starts, you'll be presented with a bried slideshow of intro piccies from the full game — click to cycle through them.

In this demo you control a small platoon of men — consisting of the plucky young chaps at PC GAMES, no less — and you have to guide them into the heart of a downed alien vessel in search of xenomorphic scum-bags. And once you find them, you have to kill them.

Before battle commences you're given a chance to inspect your team. Click on the arrows in the top-right corner of the screen to cycle through each trooper's inventory screen. Objects can be examined and moved around by clicking and dragging with the mouse. When you're happy, click on OK to start the bug-hunt.

The game takes place in turns, just like a boardgame. Each trooper possesses a limited number of Time Units which restricts how much they can do per turn — every action, even turning, costs Time Units. To give a soldier an order, first click on them and then click on the bank of icons at the bottom of the screen (for a brief description of what each of these does, see the diagram below). When you've done as much as you want to, click on the End Turn icon to pass play over to the aliens.

Take care — the aliens are very tough, and it's easy to get wiped out in a second. The key to success is to be very sparing in what you do each turn. Take it slowly, and try to keep some Time Units in reserve so that if you get spotted by the bugs, you can return fire.



1. Use the object in the currently-selected soldier's left hand.
2. Not used in this demo.
3. These two icons let you cycle through the map's vertical 'levels'.
4. Brings up a map of the area — only the explored areas are shown.
5. Makes your soldier stand or kneel — kneeling soldiers are more accurate shots.
6. Brings up the soldier's inventory screen.
7. Centres the 3D map on the soldier.
8. These two icons let you cycle through the soldiers in your platoon.
9. Turns off automatic wall removal.
10. Brings up the options menu.
11. Lets you end the turn.
12. Lets you quit the demo.
13. Use the object in the soldier's right hand, which is normally a gun — just pick a type of shot, then click on an enemy target.
14. Clicking on these icons makes the game automatically reserve precious Time Units as you walk around. They can then be used to return fire when you're spotted by the enemy aliens.
15. Brings up the soldier's status screen.

Premier Manager 3

Gremlin Interactive

The football management market gets ready to hot up again this Spring with the release of Tactical Manager 2 and Premier Manager 3. Which will come out on top remains to be seen, but to help you make your mind up as to which you see as the winner, here's a completely playable demo of Gremlin's latest offering.

This demo is fully functional, giving you unrestricted access to all the management options in the full game. In fact, the only thing that's missing from the demo that you'll find in the full game is an option to SAVE, so you really do have a chance to find out what all the fuss is about.

Loading The Game...

...From The HD Disks

Pop Disk 2 in your machine's internal drive, log onto it and then enter **PCG** to run the installer. If you're happy with the settings, press **RETURN** to install the demo to your hard drive.

...From The CoverCD

Place the CoverCD in your CD-ROM drive, log onto it and then type **PCG** to run the CoverCD menu. Use the cursor keys to select Premier Manager 3 and hit **RETURN** to install the game onto your hard drive.

How To Play

The game is played with the mouse, so make sure you have a mouse driver installed on your system, and is controlled entirely with the icons dotted around the screen. Most of them are logical enough, and if you've played the original Premier Manager, you will already be familiar with most of them.

There are far too many icons to detail here, but if you are looking for the new features, the staffing menu allows you to take on an assistant to whom you can assign some of the more tedious jobs, and the main match now shows a graphical representation of what is going on on the pitch at any given moment.

Dark Forces

LucasArts

Doom clones may be ten a penny these days, but there can't be any game awaited with such breathless anticipation as this one. LucasArts have just finished putting the final touches to their 3D Star Wars extravaganza, and hot off the presses we bring you a completely playable level of the fabulous Dark Forces.

In this single-mission demo, you have to break into the Imperial base, find the plans for the Death Star, and then get out again. Don't expect it to be an all-guns blazing death-or-glory experience, though — there's limited ammo and few places to hide, so you're going to end up spending a lot of time ducking through doorways and crouching in lifts. But isn't that the spirit of the Rebel Alliance anyway?

Loading The Game...

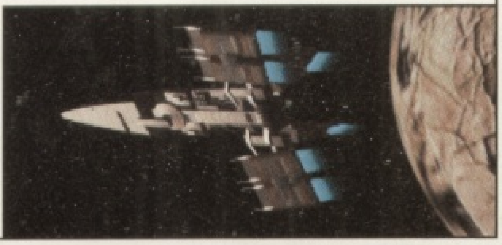
Place the CoverCD in your CD-ROM drive, log onto it and then type **PCG** to run the CoverCD menu. Use the cursor keys to select Dark Forces and hit **RETURN** to run the game or install it onto your hard drive.

How To Play

The game is viewed from a Doom-like first-person perspective, and is controlled using the following keys:

Cursor Up	Walk forward
Cursor Down	Step backward
Cursor right/left	Turn right/Turn left
CTRL	Fire weapon
1,2,3,4:	Select weapon
SPACE	Use switch/Open door
ALT + Cursor	Sidestep
Page Up/Page Down	Look up/Look down

To leave the demo, press ESCape.



Inferno

Ocean

DID's 3D bonanza is ready at last, and we at PC GAMES quite like it. We thought it would be a shame to leave our lovely readers out of the picture, so if you look on this month's CoverCD, you'll find a playable mission from that game for your enjoyment.

It's a solo run through hostile weather against some of the bases that have not yet been destroyed during the war, and your only back up seems to be a bunch of fighters who are only interested in acting as an enemy distraction. You've got a complete complement of weapons and a brand new ship, so get on out there!

Loading The Game...

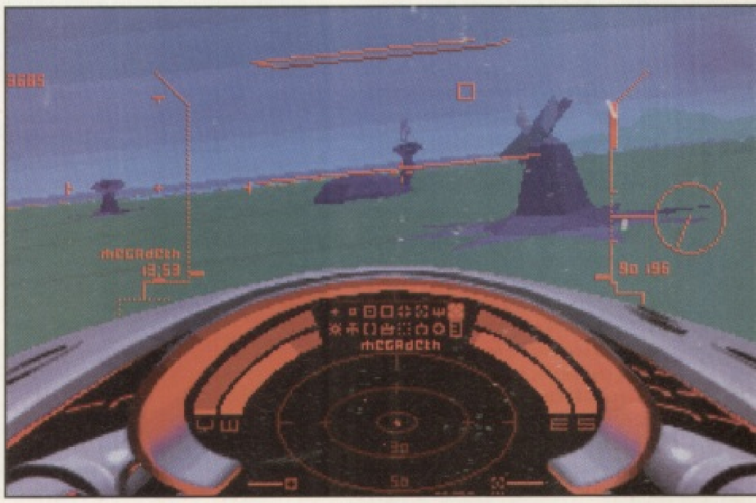
Place the CoverCD in your CD-ROM drive, log onto it and then type **PCG** to run the CoverCD menu. Use the cursor keys to select Inferno and hit **RETURN** to install the game onto your hard drive and configure the game for your PC. After that, type **INFDEMO** to run the demo.

How To Play

The game is played with a combination of mouse and keys or joystick and keys, so make sure you have the appropriate drivers loaded before you run the demo. The mouse/joystick is used to steer the ship in all three dimensions, and the following keys control the rest of the game:

+/-	Set the throttle. You can only move at half speed when underwater, so try not to go too fast when you dip beneath the waves.
RETURN	Select weapon from the bank at the top of the cockpit instrumentation.
SPACE	Fire currently-selected weapon.
N	Brings up the NavMap.
T	Cycles through targets in vicinity.
P	Pick up combat pods.
DEL/INS	Toggles weapons and combat pods.

There's no quit, so you'll need to reset your machine when you've finished play.



Wings Of Glory
Origin

Biplane flight simulations have to be the most exciting aerial combat games around. Goodbye high tech missiles that can take out the enemy long before you can actually see them — dogfighting at its best can only be found in a double-winged aircraft, and Wings of Glory from Origin is the perfect example. Get out into the skies against the fiendish Red Baron, up-diddly-up, down-diddly-down, crash behind enemy lines, get captured, then escape and get back home for tea and sausages.

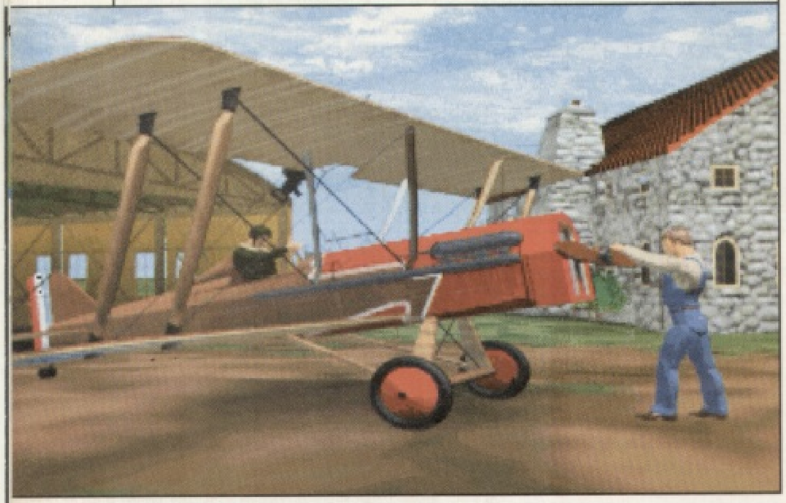
Loading The Game...

Place the CoverCD in your CD-ROM drive, log onto it and then type **PCG** to run the CoverCD menu. Use the cursor keys to select Wings Of Glory and hit **RETURN** to install the game onto your hard drive. Now enter **INSTALL** to alter the demo's sound configuration, and then enter **WG** to play.

How To Play

The demo is played with the keyboard, using the following keys:

Cursor keys	**Controls the nose of the plane**
SPACE	**Fire cannon**
A	**Autopilot — takes you to the heart of the battle**
F1-F8	**Interior and exterior views**



Mortal Kombat 2
Acclaim

Is this the king of the beat-'em-ups? You'll probably think so when you try out this completely playable version of this arcade perfect conversion. The aim is simple — beat the hell out of the other person on-screen by any means you can, fair or foul. The last one standing is the winner.

Loading The Game...

Place the CoverCD in your CD-ROM drive, log onto it and then type **PCG** to run the CoverCD menu. Use the cursor keys to select Mortal Kombat 2 and hit **RETURN** to run the game or install it onto your hard drive.

How To Play

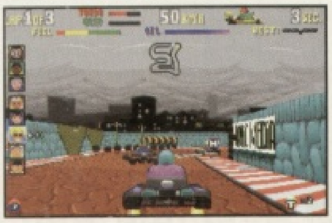
The game is controlled with the keyboard, using the following keys for Player One and Player Two.

	Player 1	Player 2 (keypad)
Right	C	6
Left	Z	4
Jump	D	8
Crouch	X	2
Punch	B,M	1,3
Kick	N,H	7,9

To start a one-player game press F1, and to start a two-player game, press F2. Press F10 during the intro screens to bring up an options screen that'll let you configure the game's controls and sound settings.

SuperKarts
Manic Media

This game is already taking the Shareware boards by storm, and here's a little demo so you can find out what all the fuss is about. This is a single-player version of the game, where you race over five laps of a single track with no other aim than to beat the rest of the pack. There are items strewn around the track which will help you.



Loading The Game...

Place the CoverCD in your CD-ROM drive, log onto it and then type **PCG** to run the CoverCD menu. Use the cursor keys to select SuperKarts and hit **RETURN** to run the game or install it onto your hard drive.

How To Play

The game is controlled with the keyboard, using the following keys:

A	**Accelerate**
Z	**Brake**
>	**Steer right**
<	**Steer left**
ALT	**Reverse**
SPACEBAR	**Use turbo boost**
ESCape	**Quits from the demo**

On The Ball
Ascon

Another football management title made available this month is Ascon's On The Ball: The CD Edition. Very similar in presentation to the original On The Ball, this game features the vocal talents of none other than John 'Motty' Motson, who's on hand to give you spoken commentary during the entire match.

Loading The Game

Place the CoverCD in your CD-ROM drive, log onto it and then type **PCG** to run the CoverCD menu. Use the cursor keys to select On The Ball and hit **RETURN** to install the game onto your hard drive. Now enter **SETUP** to alter the demo's sound configuration, and then enter **OTBCD** to play.

How To Play

The game is controlled with the mouse, and as you move the pointer over icons on the main screen, text will appear explaining what those icons do.

To get straight into a match and to hear what Motty has to say, click on the Tactics icon (the door the back of the office), and then click on the top of the clipboard that appears until you reach team selection. Choose your team of eleven men good and true, assigning the free kick and penalty takers by clicking in the space next to their highlighted names, and you're in!

Paniktronic
It's not a kick – it's a SA

Virtua Chess
Titus

Titus' new chess program is really something special, and they've been nice enough to give us this massive 21-move demo of the game that features just about everything in the full title. It's one of the best chess programs we've come across, so why don't you try it out for yourself?

How To Play

The game is played with the mouse, so make sure you have a driver installed. You play as you would any other chess program — click with the mouse button when the cursor is over the piece you want to move, and then release the button when you've placed it. If you hold down the right button, a menu bar appears that allows you to change just about everything in the game.

Loading The Game...

Place the CoverCD in your CD drive, log onto it and then type **PCG** to run the CoverCD menu. Use the cursor keys to select Virtua Chess and hit **RETURN** to run the game.

Xplora I
Mirage

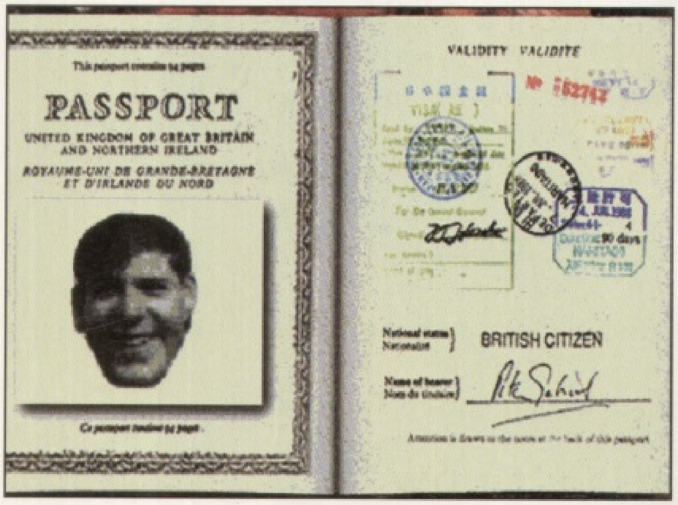
Okay, so it isn't really a game, but we figured that you people out there want to see what else your CD-ROM drive is capable of, right? So we've included this mammoth demo of Peter Gabriel's Xplora 1, touted as being one of the best multimedia presentations around. This demo takes you through all of the major parts of the entire package, and all we can say about it is that it's weird. Try it for yourself and see.

Loading The Game...

Xplora 1 runs under Windows, so load up Windows and use the File Manager to run the **SETUP.EXE** file which you'll find in the root directory of your CoverCD. This will create a program group on your Windows desktop, which you can then use to run the demo itself.

How To Play

You don't exactly play this demo — just use the mouse to click on any parts of the screen that interest you, then sit back, watch and listen...


PASSPORT
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
ROYAUME-UNI DE GRANDE-BRETAGNE ET D'IRLANDE DU NORD
VALIDITY VALIDITE
BRITISH CITIZEN

Secrets Of Stargate
Compton's New Media

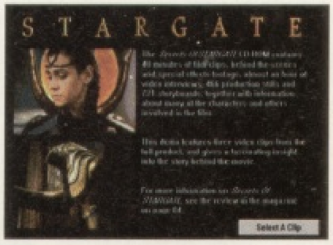
Kurt Russell's new sci-fi title is causing a bit of a storm at the moment, due to its fantastic special effects, most of which were generated on computer. As a celebration of this fact Compton's New Media have put together Secrets Of Stargate, a multimedia presentation showing just how the film was made. Our demo features just a few images and video clips from the final product, which should be in the shops as we speak.

Loading The Game...

The demo runs under Windows, so you'll need to start your Windows software, and then use the File Manager to run the file **SETUP.EXE** in the **STARGATE** directory on the CD. This will create a program group on screen, and after that the rest is easy!

How To Play

Simply click on the appropriate buttons, remembering to select your drive letter before you select a clip to play. It's that easy!



Alone In The Dark 3
Infogrames

Infogrames continue their stunning — and award winning — Alone In The Dark series with a little jaunt into the Wild West. In this demo you once again take on the role of Edward Carnby, ghostbuster extraordinaire. This time, however, he's trying to find his way around a spooky ghost town without getting killed by the ghoulies. Does that sound like a caper to you? Or just a slightly dirty joke?

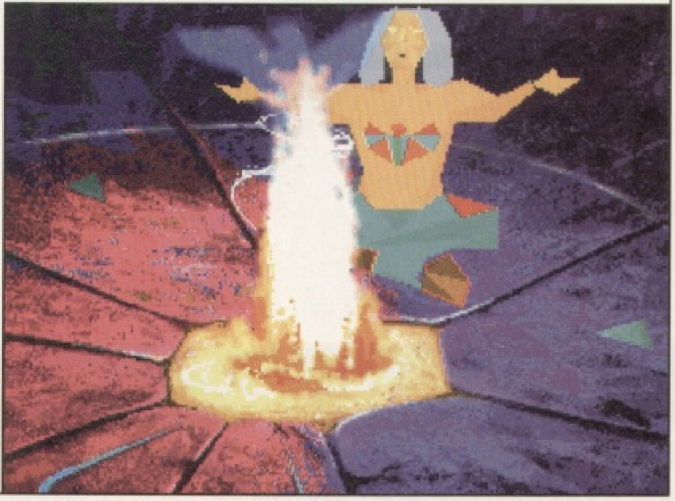
Loading The Game

Place the CoverCD in your CD-ROM drive, log onto it and then type **PCG** to run the CoverCD menu. Use the cursor keys to select Alone In The Dark 3 and hit **RETURN** to install the game onto your hard drive and configure the game for your PC. After that, type **AITDEMO** to run the demo.

How To Play

The game is controlled with the cursor keys, using left and right to rotate Edward and forward and back to make him walk forward and — yes, you guessed it — backward. Note that pressing forward twice makes Carnby run, which is handy if you're trying to avoid the ghosts.

Bring up the inventory screen by hitting RETURN. You can now use objects and make Carnby perform certain actions by highlighting the relevant icon and pressing RETURN again. When you're back in the gorgeous 3D world, hit SPACE to use the selected objects or perform the chosen action. Note that to fire the gun, you have to press both SPACE *AND* forwards.



ALERT! ALERT!
My disk is faulty!

Due to the massive number of disks duplicated, the odd one might be a touch faulty. If you're unlucky enough to get one of these, don't despair because help is at hand. Whatever you do DON'T SEND THEM TO US! Simply send them off to the following address with an SAE for 28p:

**PC GAMES Bodged Disks,
Diskxpress,
Unit 7, Willow Court,
Bourton Industrial Park,
Bourton-on-the-water,
Gloucestershire GL54 2HQ.**

If you think you can solve your problems over the phone, try calling the disk helpline on **(0451) 810788**. The helpline is open between 3pm and 5pm on weekdays.

Making A Boot Disk

If you're having problems running any of this month's floppy games try making a boot disk. Take a freshly formatted floppy disk, slap it into the disk drive (I'll assume it's drive A for the moment) and type: **SYS A:**. The system files will be transferred and within seconds you'll have a boot disk on your hands.

All you then need to do is leave the floppy in the disk drive, reset your PC and finally try loading the game again. Don't take the disk out of the machine as it boots up because you want the PC to read the information from the floppy rather than the hard disk.

What the... HELP!

All these demos require 4Mb of Expanded (EMS) memory to run and at least 590K of free base memory, except where stated otherwise in the System Requirements panel on page 6. If you have this, not Extended memory (XMS), they shouldn't cause you any problems whatsoever.

- Except where specified, these demos do not work under Windows and may not be compatible with Doublespace, QEMM 386 or Stacker disk compression software.

The Fine Print Bit...

The PC GAMES coverdisks are rigorously checked for viruses, but coverdisks are used at the reader's own risk. PC GAMES can accept no responsibility for damage to either data or hardware caused by using the coverdisks.

PC GAMES and its retailers are not liable for any unnotified changes to the contents of the coverdisks which may occur, okay?

FOR IBM PC COMPATIBLES

It's 1930

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Transport Tycoon.

Set the wheels in motion.

Make it big with Transport Tycoon

AVAILABLE NOW

SET THE WHEELS

TRANSPORT $ TYCOON

Written and designed by

Chris Sawyer

IN MOTION MICROPROSE

news

Infogrames Joins Ocean's Gang!

Last issue we awarded Alone In The Dark 3 a triumphant 89%. So far so good, but even our keen News noses failed to sniff a potential story with regards to this game. You see, we stated that the game was available from Infogrames — but that's not strictly the case, as the French software company has joined forces with our mates at Ocean to tie-up a distribution deal reputedly worth £2 million.

The deal is initially for three titles, and gives Ocean the job of selling and distributing AITD3, A4 Network (aka A-Train IV), and Prisoner Of Ice. This will free up more time for Infogrames, enabling it to spend more time perfecting the above games.

"PC software doesn't come much classier than the Alone In The Dark series," enthuses Ocean's chairman David Ward. "There's a real buzz in Ocean about this deal, and we're all looking forward to taking these titles to market."

Infogrames' managing director Bernard Montibert is equally excited. "It is important to us that these three games should achieve their full potential in the UK — and this arrangement assures us that this goal will be met," he says.

Ocean is looking to 'do' similar deals with other companies, and promises this is only the beginning of an aggressive push into third-party sales and distribution. "Watch this space," hints David Ward.

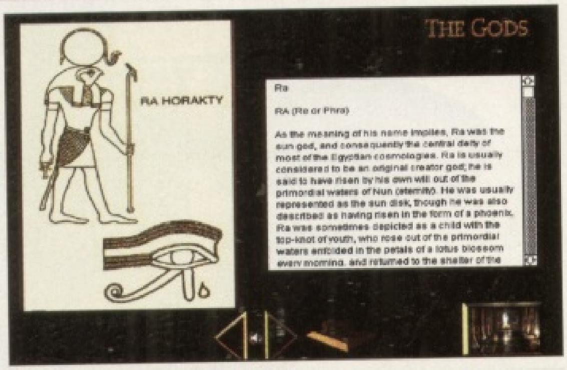
We will, matey.

Great News For Star-Gazers

A revolutionary new title from Compton's NewMedia for the first time offers CD-ROM owners the opportunity to venture behind the scenes of the blockbuster movie — without ever leaving their armchairs.

The blockbuster in question is Stargate, and Secrets Of Stargate is a multimedia package containing over 40 minutes of film footage, much of which is exclusive to the disc. Storyboards, star biographies and additional background information are but a click of the mouse away, with experimental scenes used to test the film's special effects proving to be the most interesting.

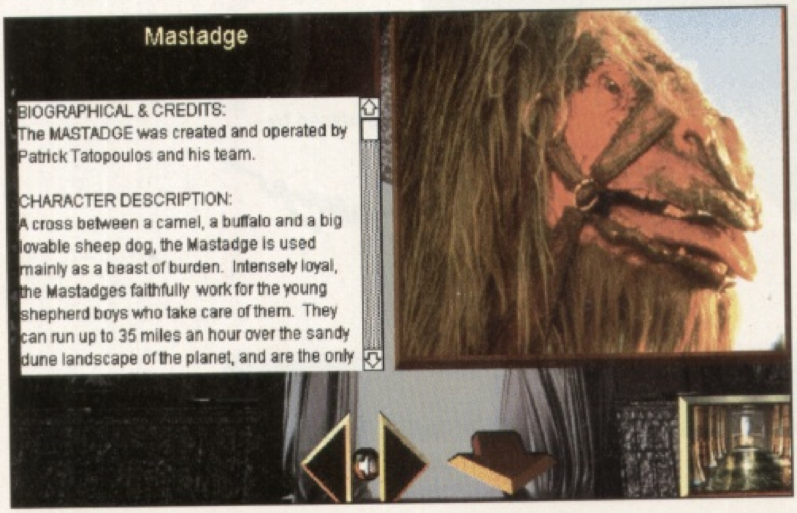
Priced at £34.99, Secrets Of Stargate should be in the shops now.



Ra

RA (Re or Phra)

As the meaning of his name implies, Ra was the sun god, and consequently the central deity of most of the Egyptian cosmologies. Ra is usually considered to be an original creator god; he is said to have risen by his own will out of the primordial waters of Nun (eternity). He was usually represented as the sun disk, though he was also described as having risen in the form of a phoenix. Ra was sometimes depicted as a child with the top-knot of youth, who rose out of the primordial waters enfolded in the petals of a lotus blossom every morning, and returned to the shelter of the



BIOGRAPHICAL & CREDITS:
The MASTADGE was created and operated by Patrick Tatopoulos and his team.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTION:
A cross between a camel, a buffalo and a big lovable sheep dog, the Mastadge is used mainly as a beast of burden. Intensely loyal, the Mastadges faithfully work for the young shepherd boys who take care of them. They can run up to 35 miles an hour over the sandy dune landscape of the planet, and are the only

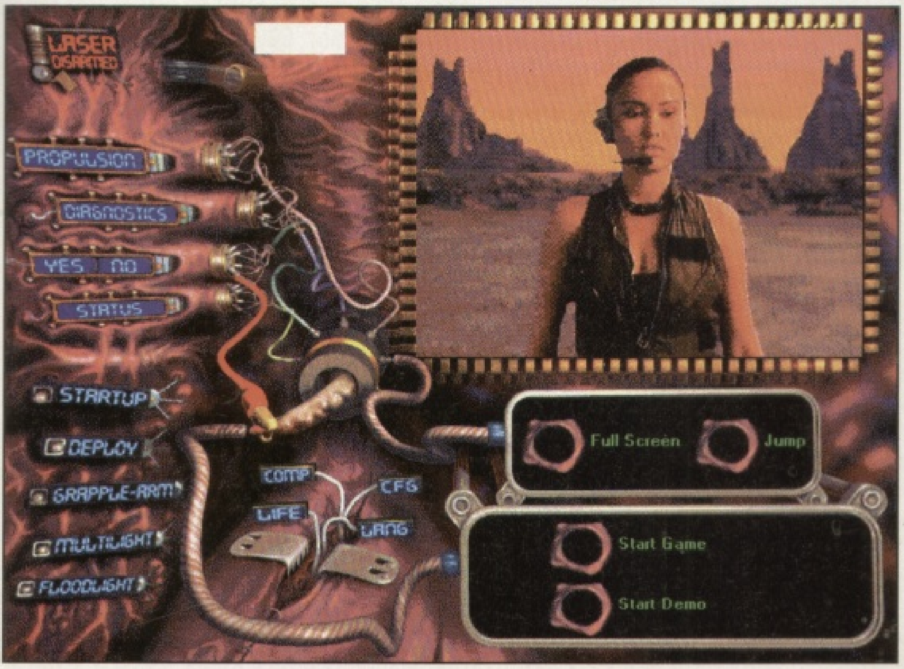
Striker **Light!**

A soccer game from Tony Adams would usually be something to be worried about, but the forthcoming Striker '95 is no cause for concern as the Mr Adams involved is not of the donkey variety. Nope, he's the MD of Time-Warner Interactive Europe — phew, eh?

Developed by Rage Software, Striker '95 should be an even better looking game that EA's FIFA. A nippy flying camera captures the action from almost every angle, and the 256-colour SVGA graphics will make jaws drop across the land. For those less than handy with a joystick, a team management option will prove just the trick.

"There are some good football games out there but we're confident that Striker '95 will be more addictive than the best of them!" exclaims Tony Adams.

Phwoaar! *Again!*



With the gap between movie making and game creation narrowing all the time, it comes as no surprise that yet more of Hollywood's stars are jumping on the interactive movie bandwagon. But it has to be said that no-one so far has been as lovely as Tia Carerra, star of Virgin's forthcoming The Daedalus Encounter.

Set in the future — like all games seem to be nowadays — The Daedalus Encounter is an interactive extravaganza that promises to be a jaw-dropping as most modern blockbusters. Live action (which took over ten days of solid filming to perfect) has been blended with computer-generated visuals to create an almost seamless science fiction world worthy of any movie.

You play the part of Casey, a space cadet whose brain has literally been blown away, only to be housed in a special floating, erm, 'thing' through which most of the game is viewed. Over two hours of footage is spread across three discs, with the action interspersed with loads of brain-taxing puzzles.

We've seen a very early version and, provided the level of interactivity is sufficiently high, we reckon this will be of the more interesting games to hit the shelves this year. Look out for a preview soon.

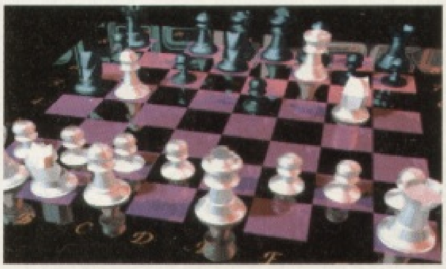
Bishop *in Pawn Shock*

The 'Virtua' tag has been attached to many games, especially Sega's series of action-packed 3D arcade machines (Racer, Fighter and Cop), but the first PC release to be prefixed with this word features the frenetic, violent and exciting world of... um... chess.

Virtua Chess from Titus brings the chess simulator bang up to date. These traditionally Windows-based programs have until now relied on simple top-down views with two-dimensional graphics that look like all the pieces have fallen over. Virtua Chess will change all this. Its revolutionary 3D view allows you to look at the action from every angle imaginable — and a few more besides. The pieces have been modelled on Silicon Graphics machines and the results are, well, impressive to say the least.

Another drawback with computer-based chess sims is the time the computer takes to work out its next move — on the higher levels at least, half an hour's thumb twiddling is not unusual. Titus reckons that its first foray into the chess world checkmates all other sims: in 'independent' tests, VChess proved to be three times faster than Chessmaster 4000 and Gambit Kaspirov, both considered by many to be the joint kings of the genre.

Titus hopes that VChess's snazzy graphics and impressive list of features will go some way to bringing chess to the mass market. Whether this happens or not, chess aficionados at the very least should find this to their liking. We'll hopefully bring you a full review next month.



Team **Talk**

Who are the geezas who write PC GAMES? And just what or who has taken their fancy this month? All is revealed below...

David Upchurch

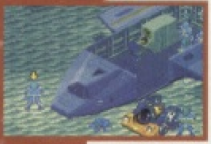
Editor

The rosy-cheeked chuckling chubster wasn't quite his old self this month, because he was struck down by a nasty flu-bug which kept him bed-ridden for a week. "Koff! Splutter! Got to... play... Dark Forces..." he croaked weakly, before collapsing back onto his sick bed.

Dean Evans

Reviews Editor

Swoonsome Dean had a bit of funny turn while playing our UFO demo. When his on-screen alter-ego had his mind controlled by the aliens, Dean suddenly went as white as ghost and, in a funny voice, said "I... am Evanus... Of Borg... Your life... as you have known it... is over..." Then Alex quickly slapped him in the face and he seems to be all right now...



Alex Simmons

Staff Writer

"It's been lucky for me that Dave's been off sick," said po-faced Alex, as he hid some Giant-sized Mars Bars that he'd laced with flu virus in his desk drawer, "because it meant that I finally got a chance to review some decent games for once, like LucasArts' Dark Forces and Interplay's Descent."

David Kelsall

Art Editor

"Regular readers won't be surprised by my choice for game of the month," said the Star Wars-crazy design chimp. "Yes, it's Dark Forces — although I thought it was a shame that you didn't play a Jedi, because then you could've gone around chopping up the aliens with a lightsabre. That would've been fanto-fox!"

Yes, I'm back again, the Devil's one-and-only official advocate, with yet more gripes about the software industry. This month, I would like to take the opportunity to explain why...

"Big business means bad news!"

I'm not too sure I like the so-called 'Big Boys' muscling in on our industry. Over the past six months or so we've seen several major corporations snap up smaller development teams and take a large slice of the software cake. But while this injection of cash may come as a relief to some of those involved, the arrival of these mega corporations may — just may — have a detrimental effect on games as we know them.

Since the days of the ZX81, Spectrum and Commodore 64, games programmers have been true enthusiasts. Cooped-up inside their bedrooms for months on end, coders such as Andy Braybrook, Archer Maclean, David Braben and Geoff Crammond have toiled away on labour-of-love projects developed as much to satisfy their creative needs as for commercial success. Back in those days you could publish a game on a shoe-string and the rewards would often be immense. And with every project developed by individuals came innovation and playability.

Now, though, things are different. True individual talents are few and far between, with programmers being replaced by faceless teams. Back in the 'good old days' you could always name the coders behind a game, but now... Well, I've less than no idea of who wrote Doom, Ecstatica or Alone In The Dark 3. Okay, so these are great games, but as the Big Money snaps up the smaller fish, I can't help feeling that top titles such as these will be replaced by multimedia 'interactive movies' with as much playability as a wooden ring and a broken stick.

The trouble with these big organisations is that they have to justify a project by the profit they can recoup. This means games will become increasingly time sensitive — if something is not quite right and a deadline is looming then financing an additional month's development can be quite costly and eat into the cash pumped back into Mr Fat Cat's bulging wallet.

Perhaps I'm being a little too harsh as we've yet to see much emerge from the vaults of these 'super publishers'. But as the industry becomes increasingly run by 'Suits' who wouldn't know a decent game if it danced naked on their fat bellies, it seems likely that the definition of game will have to be changed to: several hours of video footage and sod-all else.

The computer games industry has survived so far without the interests of huge corporations. Okay, so I could be guilty of extreme cynicism, but I can't believe that the arrival of these Big Boys can be anything other than worrying.

● What do you think of Imp's rantings? Write in and tell us at: PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Incidentally, Imp's opinions are his own, and in no way reflect those of PC GAMES or its publishers.

Canadian Hot Wings

Fighter Wing from Merit Studios is a fast-paced flight sim that chucks tedious accuracy out of its cockpit in favour of pure arcade action. It could even be the first game to be developed partially in Cyberspace, as some members of the team behind the game haven't even met each other in the real world!

Fighter Wing utilises a complex 3D engine that manages to create a realistic game world without proving too processor intensive. Key points in the game are displayed with short FMV clips, giving the whole thing a film-like atmosphere. Pre-rendered sequences which will depict the weapons and planes available are also promised. But perhaps the best news for gaming animals like ourselves is the network option which will give up to 16 players the chance to blow each others' brains out.

Many of the programmers, artists and testers have flown planes for various armed forces, and their goal is universal: to create a game that is realistic yet highly entertaining. And first impressions and feedback from the CES suggest that this could well be the 'sleeper' hit of 1995, especially if the network option is up to scratch.

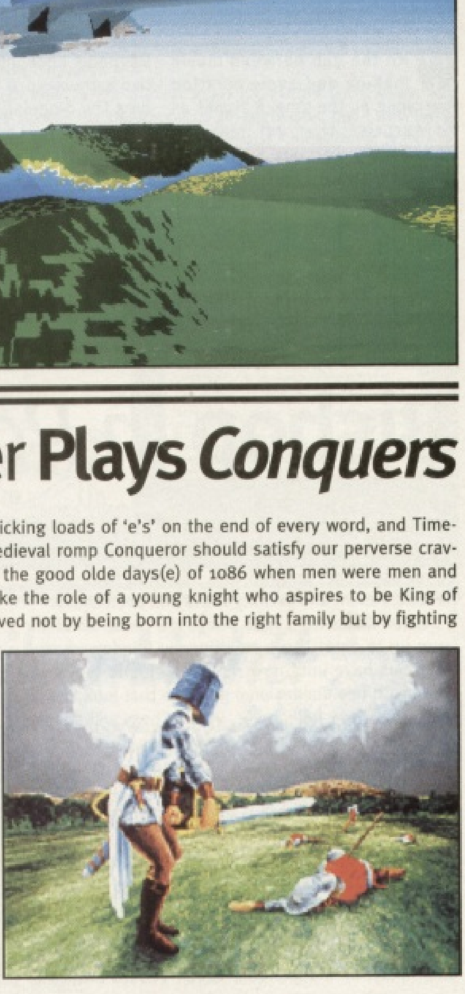
Barring any major disasters, we should be giving the game a proper test fly next month.

Time-Warner Plays *Conquers*

There's nothing we like more than sticking loads of 'e's' on the end of every word, and Time-Warner Interactive's forthcoming medieval romp Conqueror should satisfy our perverse cravings several times over. Yes, it's back to the good olde days(e) of 1086 when men were men and girls drank beer and had fights. You take the role of a young knight who aspires to be King of England — something that can be achieved not by being born into the right family but by fighting the hardest men in the land.

A heady mix of action, adventure, strategy and role-playing is promised, with the game sprawling over almost every genre imaginable. Like the oldy Defender Of The Crown, Conqueror encompasses all aspects of medieval life, with plenty of jousts, quests and tournaments forming the average working day. First-person perspective action sequences will form the bulk of the game, with the strategic elements heading up the rear.

Look out for more news before Conqueror's summer release.



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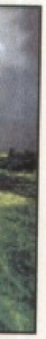

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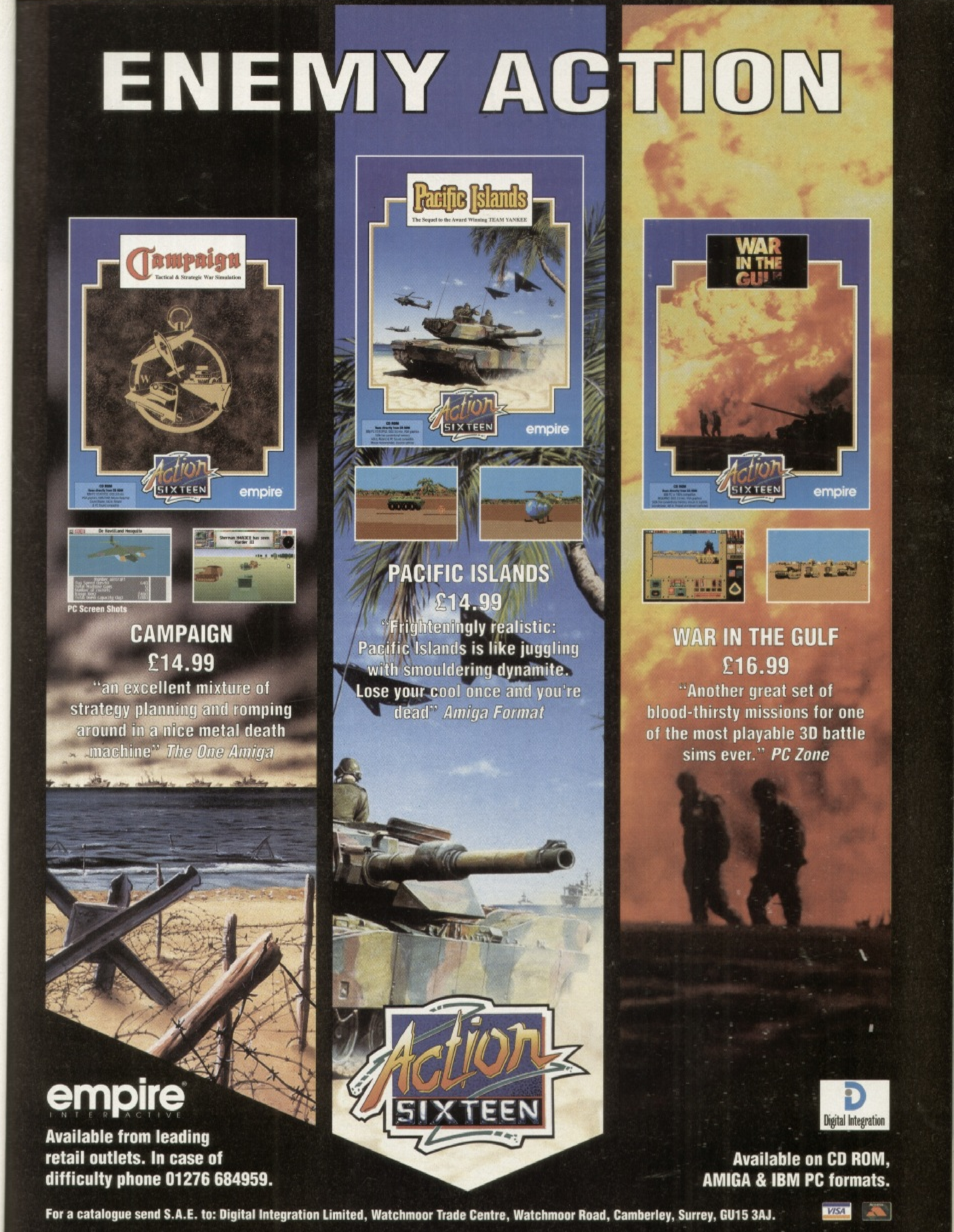
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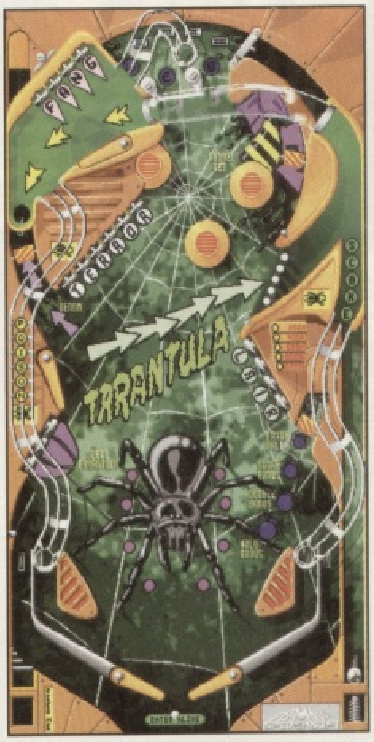
Magic Carpet *Flops!*

The phenomenon that is Magic Carpet shows no sign of abating, as the floppy version smashes its way into stores this month. Thankfully, Bullfrog has managed to cram the entire game onto a mere four discs, and the only thing missing will be a few scenes from the intro sequence.

CD-ROM owners, meanwhile, will be pleased to know that there's also some more Carpet for them this month. Hidden Worlds, which contains a further 25 action-packed levels, will appear first on CD, though Bullfrog stresses that there's a strong possibility that a floppy version may appear some time later in the year.

Pricing details for both titles have yet to be announced.



Fantastic Balls!

21st Century simply can't get enough pinball action. Its Pinball Fantasies has just been 'deluxed', meaning that the game will be re-released with an additional four tables, bringing the total to a whopping eight.

Although pricing details have yet to be announced, even if Pinball Fantasies Deluxe costs a billion pounds, it will still represent tremendous value for money. For the record, the new tables — each with a unique soundtrack — are called Jackpot, Jail Break, Tarantula and Kick Off.

21st Century Entertainment's managing director Andrew Hewson is cock-a-hoop about his new release. "This is a superb added-value gaming opportunity for PC owners, and the quality and features in the four new tables reflect our commitment to excellence in Pinball Simulators," he says.

GameTek Sale — Everything Must Go!

The budget market looks set to snowball this year as yet another company launches its own cut-price label. Gametek is launching Advantage Point this month — but don't let the rather naff name put you off, as there are some stonking games waiting to be snapped up.

Frontier: Elite II and The Humans head-up the first batch, both of which will cost around £12.99 — right bargains and no mistaking. Also leading the brand's initial push will be the first of Gametek's Cinema titles which Adrian Cale, the firm's PR bod, tells us are ace. "We're looking to drive our catalogue sales and offer consumers a new price point for more cultish titles," adds Ade. Some 26 titles are to be launched on the label — many on PC — and prices will begin at £4.99.

Yank **Invasion**

American publisher Viacom New Media's first 'quarter' (as the marketing bods like to call it) is quite literally chock-a-block with PC goodies, and sees the software debut of hip music meisters MTV.

The cheerily-titled Club Dead is, according to Viacom, everything you would expect from the world's coolest TV network (obviously the tele-visual feast that is Top Of The Pops isn't counted here). It's a sci-fi mystery adventure set in the year 2024, and features over 90 minutes of live-action video. This — of course — doesn't mean that there'll be no gameplay.

Next up from the 'Com is Jump Raven, a more traditional arcade game. We've seen nothing concrete on it yet, but its credentials are more than promising. The Mac version won best game at some foreign show or other, and MacUser awarded it the coveted '4-Mice' rating (what are they on?). Blimey or what?

Finally, Are You Afraid of the Dark? is a photo-realistic adventure from the halls of Nickelodeon. Aimed at kids aged eight and upwards this title steers clear of the shocks and thrills of more mature titles like Alone In The Dark, with the emphasis more on family fun.

All three titles are due for a Spring release, which means that we should — with any luck — have some review copies in time for next month's issue.

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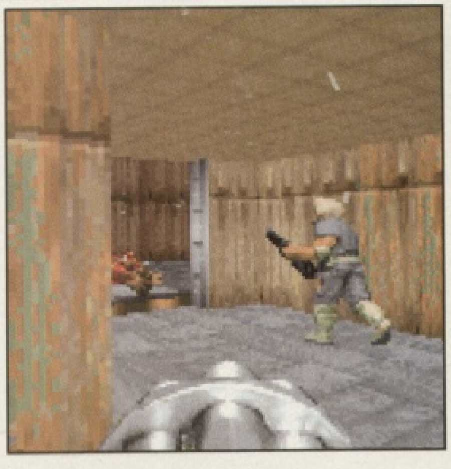
Hollywood Is Doomed!

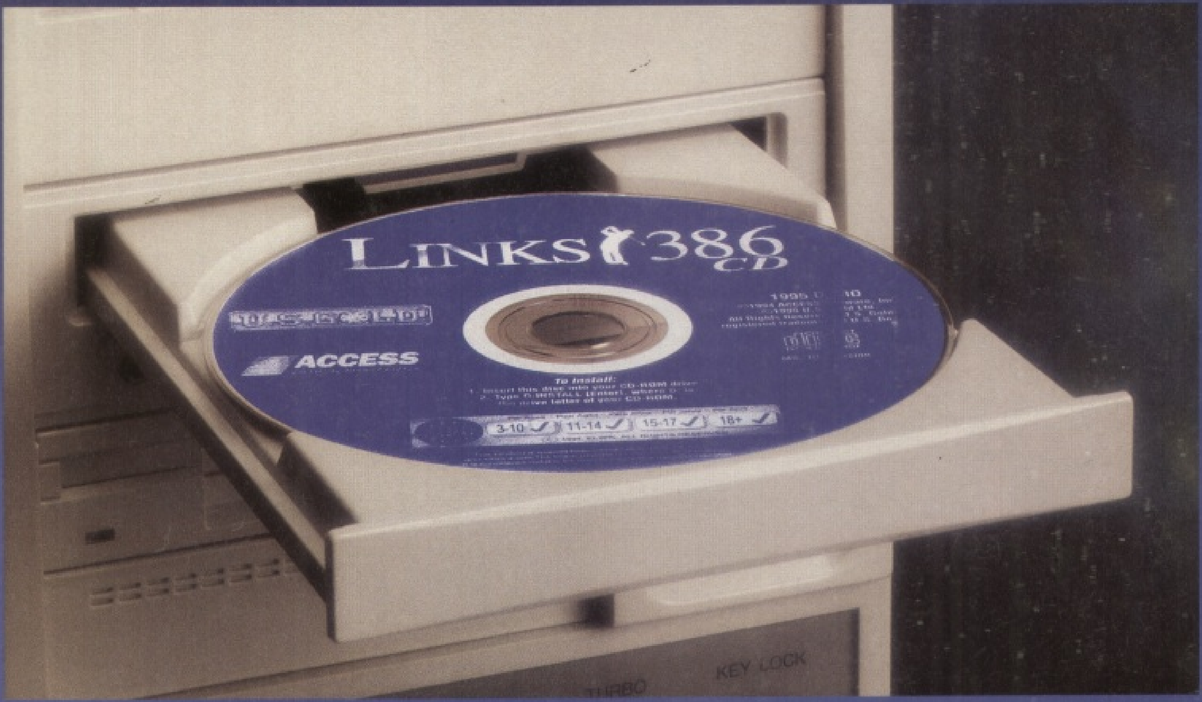
News reaches us that the endless rumours of a Doom movie have finally evolved into fact. Yes, it seems likely that Hollywood is set to go iD crazy this year as a celluloid version of our fave first-person 3D gore-fest has been 'optioned' by film-maker Ivan Reitman.

Translated into layman's terms, this means that Ivan's film company has paid iD for first refusal. A script is currently being penned, and provided this is up to scratch, the film should go into production within the next couple of months.

Reitman seems a strange choice for such a potentially blood-thirsty film. He's previously helmed such gore-fests as Ghostbusters and Twins, both noted for their limited appeal and high body counts.

Mind you, at least Steven Spielberg hasn't got his hands on it — otherwise the introduction of cute alien monsters with big eyes would probably be inevitable.

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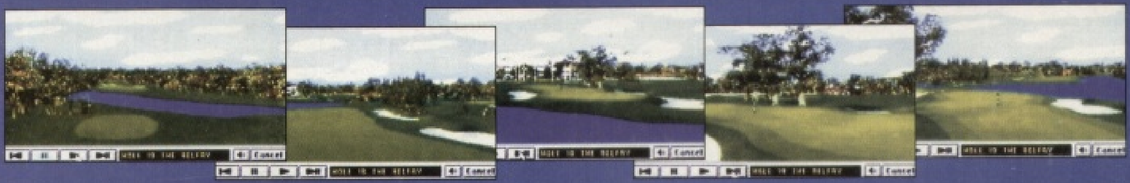
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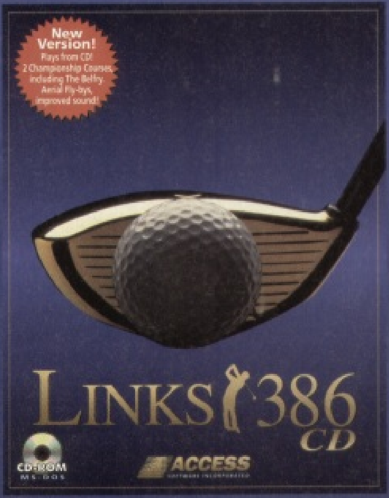
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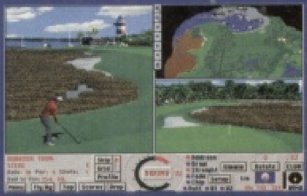

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INFO BULLETS

❍ Sales of CD-ROM drives are likely to top 30 million units a year by the end of the century, says research firm BIS Strategic Decisions. That's good news for us PC owners, but we'd like to know how BIS reached its conclusion. Did it ring potential buyers up and ask them in what year they are likely to buy their new drive?

❍ Rise Of The Robots failed spectacularly to turn itself into a decent game, but that hasn't stopped Jim Murdoch, a long-standing Mirage associate, from trying to turn it into a book. Priced £4.99, Rise Of The Robots should be in all 'good' book stores now and is, it's alleged, more playable than the game itself.

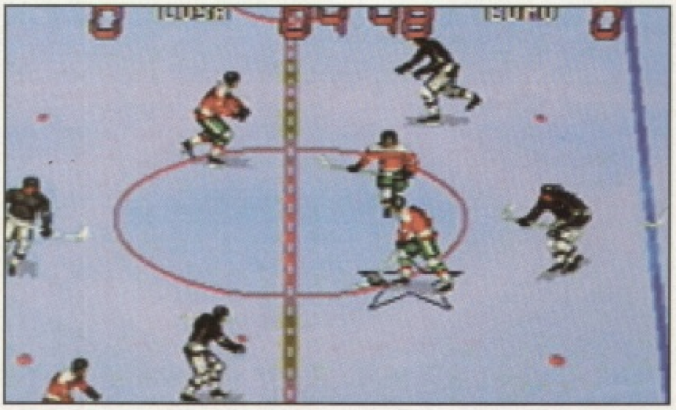
❍ Yet more good news for PC owners — over 200,000 machines were sold during the month of December, providing an indication that 1995 will be a great year for PC gamers. Why? Because software companies are likely produce more games to satisfy the demand, meaning that you, the punter, will have a greater choice. Remember to stick with us to find out what's worth snapping up.

❍ Virgin's 11th Hour has slipped once again. But it will definitely be coming out in May (yeah, which year?). We reckon it should be re-titled "Five to Twelve". But that's because we're clever.

❍ Enhancement alert! Nick Faldo's Championship Golf is coming out on CD-ROM in the next month or so.

❍ Women's magazine Bella has taken time out from harping on about knitting and make-up (or whatever it is that girls talk about nowadays) to offer its readers a top bit of practical advice. Old hot water bottles, it reckons, can be cut into oblong shapes and used as mouse mats. Hmm...

❍ Just when you thought it was safe to buy a Pentium, Intel reveals that it is about to unveil its next-generation processor, imaginatively code-named the P6. Although its precise technical specifications are currently unconfirmed, the new P6 is apparently based on a RISC (Reduced Instruction Set Computing) chip, similar to the one used in Acorn's Archimedes computer. Quite what the P6 will mean for the average computer user is uncertain, but as 486 and Pentium prices start to nose-dive, PC GAMES will have more news about this in the very next issue. Stay tuned...



Time-Warner Gretz *Serious*

Wayne Gretzy isn't only a bloke with a daft surname. Nope, he is, apparently, an all-time NHL scoring leader and four times Stanley Cup Winner — which is big news for ice hockey fans. He's also about to debut in a computer game, thanks to Time-Warner Interactive.

Wayne Gretzky's NHLPA All-Stars will feature over 26 North American teams, six International All-Star teams, and statistics of over 600 professional hockey players. You'll be able to play a full 84-game season, buying and selling players and changing the squads to suit your tactical needs.

The CD-ROM version will have a digitised Wayne talking you through the various options. But rather than doing things normally, Wayne was filmed wearing a special Cyber suit inlaid with light sensors which recorded his actions, forming a basic outline that was then turned into an animated 'skeleton' on the computer. You'll be able to play hockey properly or in an Arcade mode, where 'street' rules make the action much more physical.

Wayne Gretzky's NHLPA All-Stars should set PC owners waving their jolly hockey sticks in approval when it's released towards the end of the year.

don't die of old age waiting for your games to arrive
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Lead Us To *Temptation*

Virgin will be trumping all compilations this month with the release of Temptation, a fantastic collection of four top CD-ROM games.

Costing a measly £44.99, this pack features 7th Guest, Lands Of Lore, Hand Of Fate and IndyCar & Track pack — all of which scored highly when released.

Hitting those software shelves on March 8th, Temptation will, we reckon, serve as an excellent software start-up pack to any PC newcomers. Look out for a full review next issue.

CHARTS

Top 10 PC Games

1. **Defender Of The Empire**	VIE
2. **Premier Manager 3**	Gremlin Interactive
3. **The Lion King**	VIE
4. **Aladdin**	VIE
5. **Master Of Magic**	MicroProse
6. **Doom 2**	VIE
7. **Sim City 2000**	Maxis
8. **Warcraft**	Interplay
9. **X-Wing Triple Pack**	US Gold
10. **Cannon Fodder 2**	VIE

Top 5 CD-ROM Games

1. **Wing Commander 3**	Electronic Arts
2. **Magic Carpet**	Electronic Arts
3. **Ecstatica**	Psygnosis
4. **X-Wing Collector's CD**	VIE
5. **US Navy Fighters**	Electronic Arts

Top 5 PC Budget Games

1. **Dune 2**	The Hit Squad
2. **F1 Grand Prix**	PowerPlus
3. **Stunt Car Racer**	Kixx
4. **OutRun**	Kixx
5. **Monkey Island 2**	Kixx XL

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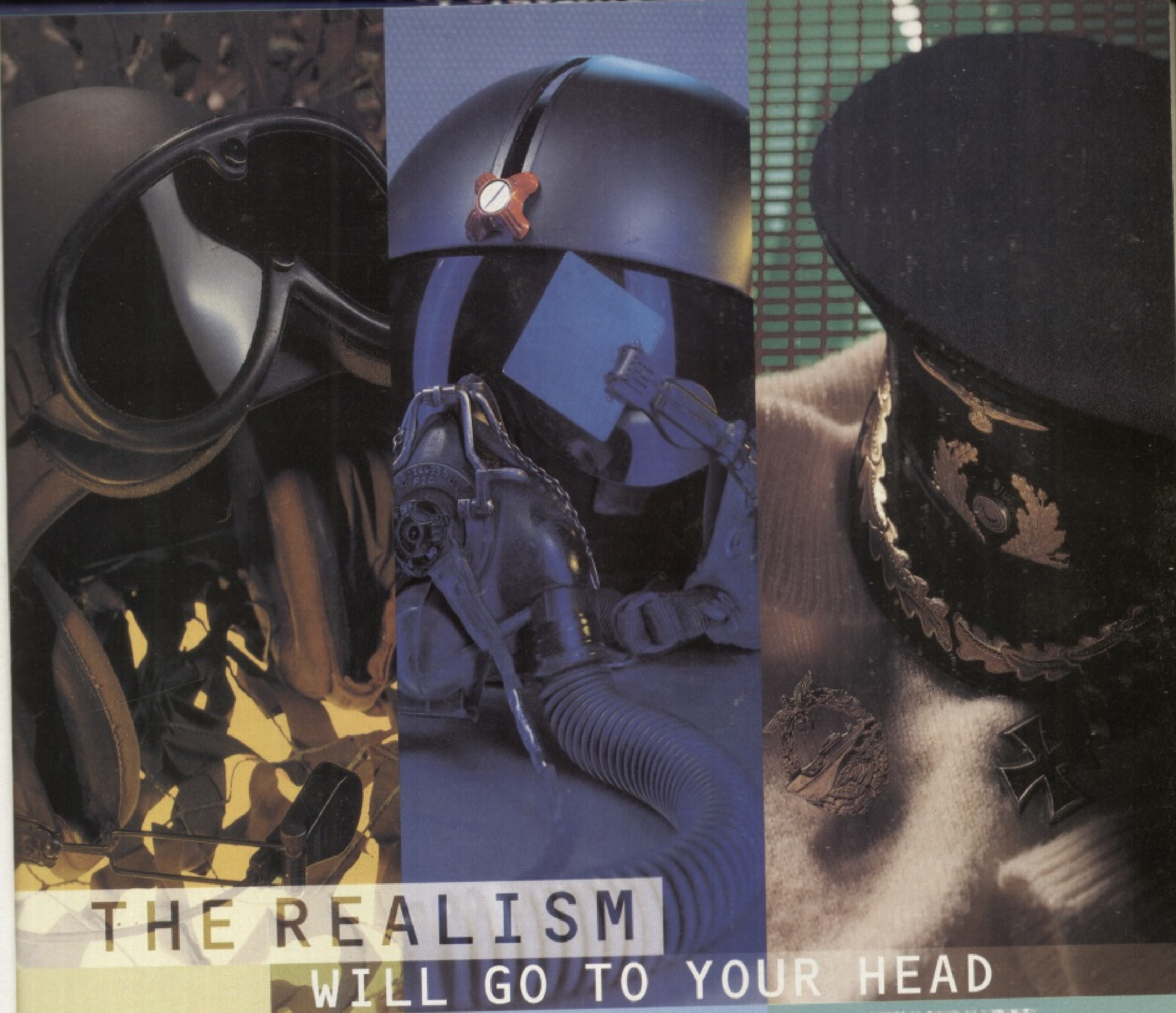

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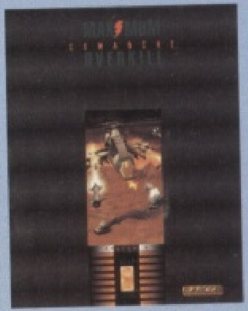

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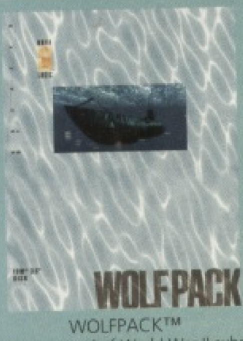

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***AND THERE'S MORE!** Consolation prizes of MicroProse T-shirts and mugs for ten runner-runners-up!*

Thanks to the boundless generosity of MicroProse, we've got a whole market stall's worth of goodies to give away in this month's compo! Yes, the 'Prosies are so excited about X-COM receiving a PC GAMES STAR that they've stumped up the cash for an unprecedented jamboree of fabulous prizes!

So what's on offer? Well, for starters the lucky winner will receive a fabulous quad-speed CD-ROM drive, along with copies of Falcon Gold, Fleet Defender Gold and Pacific Air War Gold to play on it. After all, what better way to show off the power of your new drive could there be than these hyper-enhanced multimedia marvels?

Then, five lucky-but-not-quite-as-lucky-as-the-winner runners-up will each receive a copy of X-COM: Terror From The Deep, the mega-game featured on the cover of this very issue and reviewed on page 40. Finally, there are special goody bags containing a MicroProse T-shirt and mug for ten even-less-lucky-than-the-runners-up-but-at-least-it's-better-than-nothing runner-runners-up. Not bad, eh?

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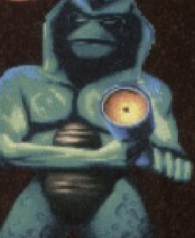

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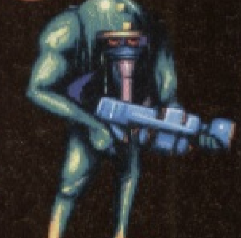

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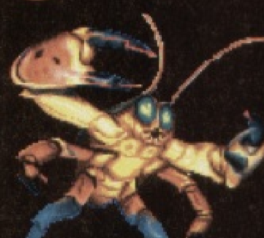

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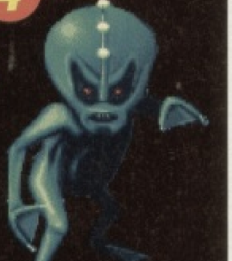

(a) Aquatoid **(b) Gill Man** **(c) Deep One** **(d) Lobster Man**

How To Enter

Just take a look at this bunch of four ugly mugs. Contrary to popular belief, it's not the PC GAMES team — it's a selection of hideous underwater aliens from MicroProse's top new sci-fi strategy game, X-COM: Terror From The Deep.

But there's a problem. Somebody has jumbled up the names — and we want you to sort out the whole sorry mess. In other words, you've got to match the names to the aliens as best you can. Once you've done that, write the answers down on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope. So, if you think Alien No. 1 is an (a) Aquatoid — although it isn't — then you'd write 1 (a) on your entry. Get the idea?

Finally, add your name and address to your entry and then send it to: Watch The Skies Compo, PC GAMES, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. All entries must reach us by the closing date on April 6th, 1995, when the winners will be selected by a multi-tentacled horror wielding an atomic ray-gun.

This competition is not open to employees of EMAP Images, their relatives or their friends. Only one entry per household. The competition closes on the 6th of April 1995, and the winners will be notified shortly afterwards. No alternative prizes will be offered. The Editor's decision is final, and no correspondence will be entered into. While every care is taken, we cannot be held responsible for entries lost or damaged in the post. Soz.

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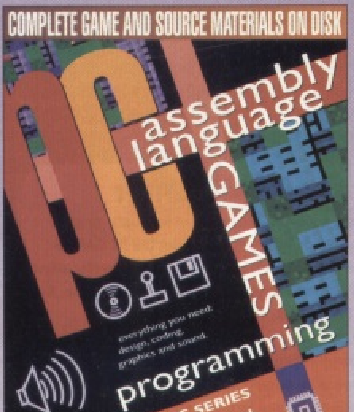
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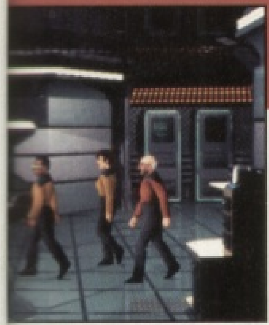
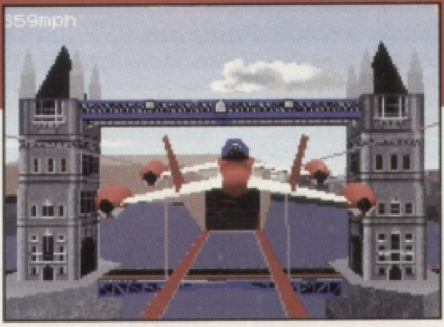
previews

This month MicroProse shows us its wares — and very impressive they are too! We also take a sneak peek at the cream of the crop of some of the PC games available shortly.





Desktop Adventures
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Death Mask
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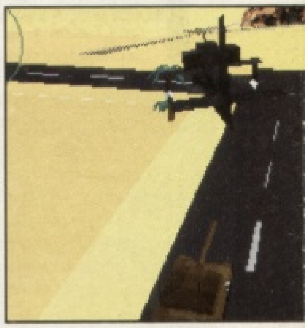
Jade Snake
Bronze Knife



MicroProse: The Future's So Bright..24

MicroProse and Spectrum Holobyte have an *incredibly* busy year ahead. The two company's 1995 release schedules are cram-packed with top-quality titles including the long-awaited but ever-impressive Star Trek: The Next Generation, Civilization Networks (beat up your 'Net chums!) and a neat little computerised card game called Magic: The Gathering. Also seeing the light of day in '95 will be Across The Rhine (still!), 1943: European Air War and loads of other goodies, including every flight sim buff's dream, Falcon 4. Dean Evans flew Stateside to MicroProse US to take a look.

Slipstream 5000..30

Gremlin kicks in the turbo with the visually awesome Slipstream. Gasp in wonder-struck awe as texture-mapped scenery streaks past at speeds of over 300 miles an hour as weird, bubble-shaped skimmers zip through canyons and across neon-lit cities. Alex Simmons buckled up and slipped in to first gear...

Indiana Jones And His Desktop Adventures..32

The Man With The Hat returns to the PC in this charming Windows-based graphic adventure which, so LucasArts claims, will be just perfect for wiling away those oh-so-boring lunch-hours. Archaeologist extraordinaire Dave Upchurch went digging for clues.

Tank Commander..34

Domark trundles onto the battlefield with the spectacular Tank Commander, the game it's billing as "Battlezone for '90s". Always one with a liking for large-calibre weapons, Dave Upchurch reports from behind enemy lines.

Simon The Sorcerer 2..36

Daft jokes and innuendo ahoy with the wacky wizard they call Simon The Sorcerer! Yup, Simon has returned, with Swamplings, goo, tacky hat and all! Alex Simmons casts (groan) his eyes over AdventureSoft's spell-binding (eurgh) sequel.

The Future's

MicroProse and Spectrum Holobyte used to be famous for their flight sims, but now they're moved into creating space adventures, card games and tank simulations. Dean Evans nips over to America, to see where all the F-numbers have gone.

To many people MicroProse and Spectrum Holobyte conjure up memories of F-numbers and Falcon 3. But as the games market has widened in scope, the two companies have changed and developed their portfolio. The traditional dominance of the aircraft sim has waned and now tank games, graphic adventures, puzzle games and even a fantasy card game have leapt in boldly to fill the gap.

But don't worry — the flight sim hasn't been abandoned completely, because with the likes of Navy Strike, 1943: European Air War, Falcon 4 and Top Gun waiting in the wings, the future's so bright, you've got to wear protective designer goggles. Or something.

But enough of the corporate clap-trap (nobody's interested anyway), MicroProse and Spectrum Holobyte have a huge number of nifty games in development and so, without further ado, we'll start the proverbial ball rolling with...

Magic: The Gathering

If I told you that the biggest game in America right now is a fantasy card game, then you might think that I was talking complete rubbish. You might think that my mind had become unhinged and that my brain had started to congeal and drip slowly out of my ears.

But I'm afraid that it's true. Magic: The Gathering has taken the US by storm. Produced by a company called Wizards Of The Coast, Magic has sold over a billion cards so far (that's over $50 million worth of business), and apparently it's the most successful paper game in the history of paper games. Obviously this is good news for MicroProse, who have snapped up the license and plan to unleash the digital version on an eager public later this year.

So what's the fuss all about? Well, if you want to start playing Magic, you've got to buy a starter pack (a basic set of cards) and then you can add to your deck, effectively customising it, by purchasing separate Booster packs and by trading spare cards with other Magic devotees. Each player brings their own personal deck to the game. In Magic, both players are powerful wizards and, starting with 20 life points, the basic idea of the game is to reduce your opponent's life points down to zero.

"As a wizard you can cast various spells and summon fantasy creatures to attack your opponent," explains David Etheridge, Magic's designer. "The wizard needs to expend certain amounts of Mana to summon and cast spells, and this Mana is built up by having Land cards, which are basically Mana generators. The appeal of the game lies in the fact that you can customise your deck and cards can be traded for new ones like baseball cards.

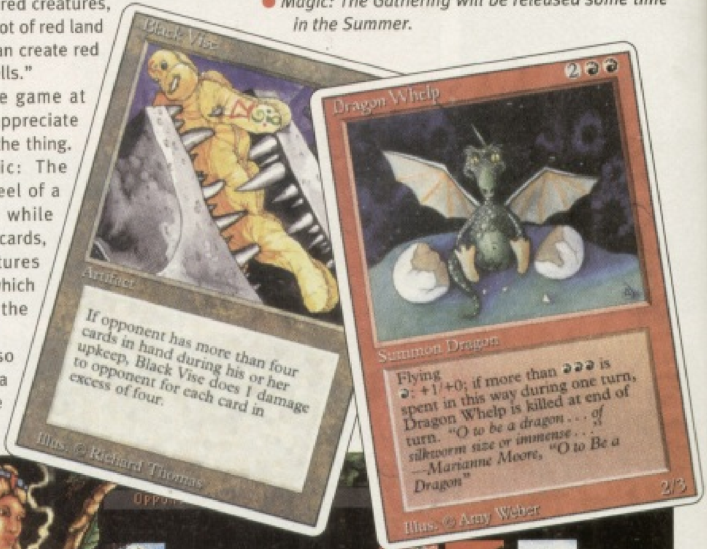
"There are five colours of magic in the game and each spell or creature requires certain Mana points of certain colours to bring it into play. So if you have a strong set of red spells and red creatures, it makes sense to include a lot of red land cards in your pack so you can create red Mana quickly to cast the spells."

If you haven't seen the game at first-hand it's difficult to appreciate the sheer addictiveness of the thing. As for the game, Magic: The Gathering will retain the feel of a table-top card game, and while you can't trade or buy new cards, the computer version features over 1,000 cards, each of which uses the same artwork as the paper originals.

Expansion disks are also planned as various extra packs are launched and the appeal of the computer game is that, if there isn't anyone around that you can play, you can indulge in a game against any one of five computer opponents. According to David Etheridge, the AI isn't bad either, and to illustrate this point, it apparently beat a guy who won the local Magic tournament in four out of five hands.

Getting the Magic license isn't just a feather in MicroProse's hat, it's a whole bloody chicken. And although it's hard to appreciate the game's appeal, it's not just a stuffy card game, with wizards, orcs, spells and other fantastical hogwash. Having played a game, I have to admit that it's engaging and absorbing stuff. It's not going to be everybody's cup of tea, but with over a billion cards sold, it's hardly a license you can just turn your back on and ignore.

● *Magic: The Gathering will be released some time in the Summer.*

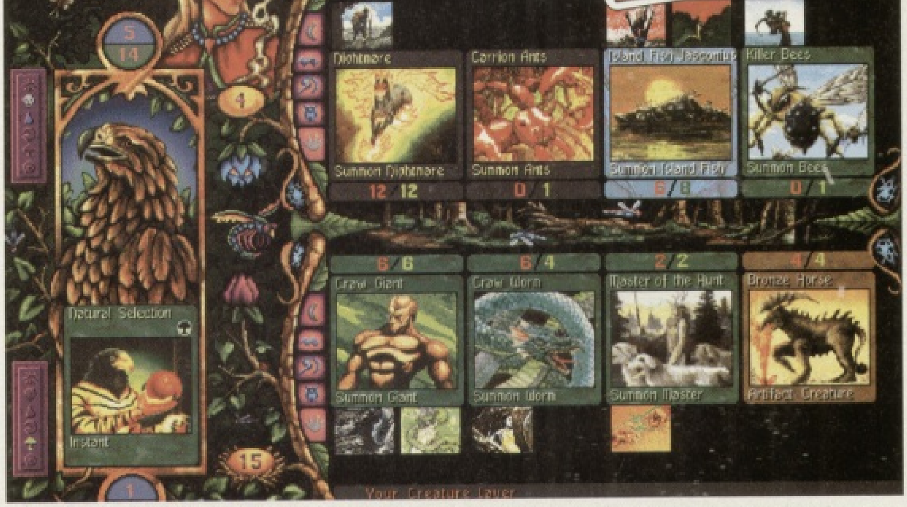


If opponent has more than four cards in hand during his or her upkeep, Black Vise does 1 damage to opponent for each card in excess of four.

Flying
: +1/+0; if more than is spent in this way during one turn, Dragon Whelp is killed at end of turn. *"O to be a dragon . . . of silkworm size or immense . . ."* —*Marianne Moore, "O to Be a Dragon"*

Creature
1
1/3

Brass Man does not untap as normal; you must pay 1 during your upkeep phase to untap it.



(Above) Magic: The Gathering is taking the States by storm, and looks likely to do the same when it's released over here. MicroProse's computerised version offers one major advantage over the original card game — you don't need mates to play it.

So Bright...

Civilization Networks

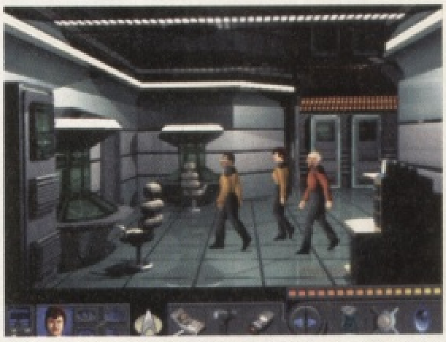
You don't need to be a genius to work out that MicroProse's imaginatively-titled Civilization Networks is the long-awaited multi-player version of Sid Meier's classic empire game. The game supports network (obviously), modem and serial play, and so theoretically you can play head-to-head Civilization with up to seven extra players, mixing computer controlled ones with the real ones — i.e you could have four live players and three computer-controlled players.

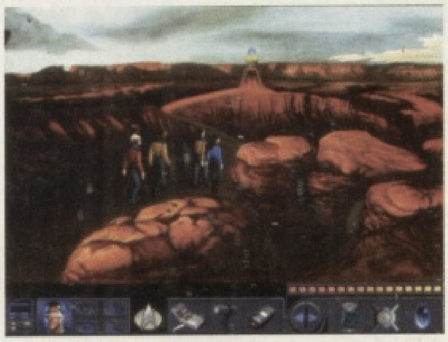
Like most multi-player games, network Civ has a chat facility which allows you to send messages globally to all players, or specifically to a player in secret, allowing you to forge alliances and gang up on the other players without anybody finding out.

"Of all the things that were requested," says Lindsay Riehl, the game's Product Manager, "people were most interested in modem play, which is what we're trying to give them here. The basic gameplay hasn't changed at all, but the game gives you the option to design your own alter-ego. You can specify whether your character is male or female, black or white, and then you can go to a costume shop to outfit yourself in the clothes of your choice. You can be as goofy or as liberal as you want."

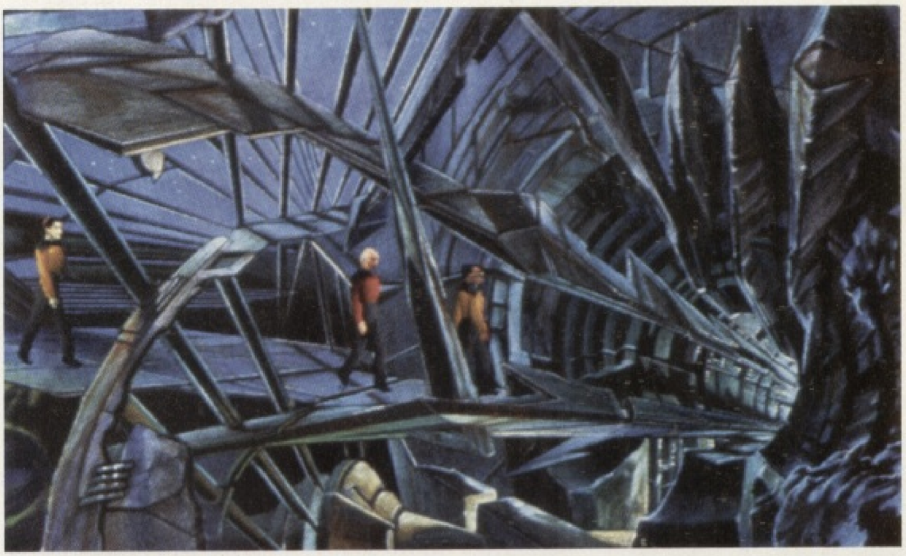
Apart from the Barbie-style costume shop, the only other changes are that the game will be SVGA and that it will probably abandon the turn-based system in favour of real-time action. Now don't jump up and complain, Civ fans, there is a reason for this, and it's simply that the designers feel that if the turn-based system was kept, there would be far too much downtime to endure, i.e. if you finished your turn first, you'd have to wait around until the other seven players finished theirs. It was decided that the turn-based system had to go in the interests of good gameplay. Thank God for that.

● *Civilization Networks is due for release some time this Summer.*





(Above left) Picard, Geordi and A. N. Other explore the deserted bowels of a research station in search of vital clues.
(Above right) Most of Star Trek: TNG takes the form of a fairly typical graphic adventure, but there are also 3D space combat sequences to add a bit of spice to the brain-storming.
(Below) Once again the TNG crew boldy go where no man — sorry, *no-one* — has gone before. The brave idiots.



Star Trek: The Next Generation

Star Trek: TNG is a vitally important license for California-based Spectrum Holobyte, not only because they've spent three years developing the game engine, but also because it marks the start of its potentially lucrative association with film giant, Paramount.

"The Star Trek TV series and the movies have generated in excess of one billion dollars," explains Rita Harrington at Spectrum, "and Interplay's Star Trek: 25th Anniversary game took advantage of this and sold over 300,000 copies. TNG, however, which has been designed as a CD-ROM product, is a step-up from 25th Anniversary. It features SVGA graphics, rendered sequences, 16-bit stereo sound and full digitised speech. Unlike 25th Anniversary, all of the missions are woven together and there's a detailed 3D combat simulator with intelligent enemies."

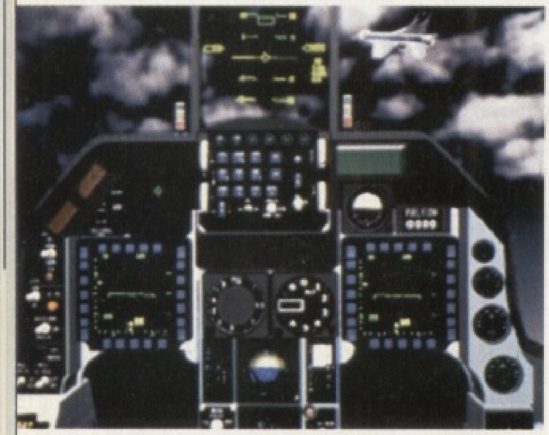
I have to admit that the TNG game, subtitled A Final Unity, looks very impressive indeed. Obviously it helps if you're a fan of the TV series but with its mix of adventuring and deep space combat, there's bound to be something in the game for everyone. In fact, one of the nicer things about TNG is the way that you can delegate some of the jobs to your crew.

For example, if you don't want to mess around with warp core breaches or containment fields, you can delegate engineering to Geordi. Likewise, if you find the combat a little too complicated and you just want to concentrate on the adventuring, you can leave the battle tactics up to Lieutenant Worf.

"TNG was originally a floppy-based game," reveals Matt Gensher, the brains behind Star Trek development at Spectrum, "but as we moved towards using SVGA, the DOS extender and full digitised voices, it had to be CD only. It's a big game. There are over 10,000 different places in the universe. You can't get to all of them — some are deep in Romulan space — but it gives the game a feeling of depth.

"Most of the game is a straight graphic adventure, with puzzles, mysteries and stuff like that. But we knew early on that you had to be able to blow the crap out of things so a combat element is in the game as well. But most importantly, TNG has been designed to be easy for a novice to play. There is a beginner's level where you are given a lot of help and this help comes from the characters themselves, i.e. Picard may say to his crew 'Any suggestions?' and you can talk to any of the characters — Data, Riker, Counsellor Troi, etc — to get advice."

Star Trek TNG: A Final Unity looks as though it will be a huge success when it finally makes an appearance on the PC in April and, with over 10,000 lines of recorded dialogue (Patrick 'Jean-Luc Picard' Stewart had over 2,000 of these himself), 25 cutscenes, three difficulty levels and some of the toughest puzzles this side of the Romulan Neutral Zone, this could well be the game that soars up the heights of PC GAMES stardom to join Magic Carpet and Little Big Adventure. We'll try our damnedest to bring you a full review in the next issue.



Falcon 4

"Falcon 3 built its reputation on being a complicated high-end sim and with it we captured the hearts and minds of the hard-core flight sim aficionados," says Neil Johnston, Falcon's designer. "But we had to ask ourselves 'Who did we miss out?' and 'Was Falcon too complicated?' I had friends that would watch me fly Falcon 3 but wouldn't play it themselves. This is the thing that we want to try and fix — the gap between realism and fun."

Probably the one thing that impressed me the most during my trip to MicroProse/Spectrum Holobyte were the technical specifications for Falcon 4. Nobody has ever produced a sim that has spanned the entire spectrum of flight sim-dom, and Spectrum Holobyte haven't tried to. What they have done instead is snapped up the license to Top Gun (which we'll be looking at next issue) and produced a beginner/intermediate, action-flying game and then Falcon 4, an intermediate/advanced flight sim.

Falcon 3 is regarded by many as the most realistic flight sim on the PC. It's not the prettiest game ever, but if you're looking for the closest simulation of an F-16, a MiG-29 or an F/A-18 Hornet, then Falcon 3 is the yardstick against which all other sims are measured. It's very realistic, you fly across a real world and the artificial intelligence is very good.

These are things that the designers want to hang onto and cram into the new-and-improved Falcon 4. What they want to avoid is the super-steep learning curve, the avalanche of keyboard controls and the amount of time between loading up the game and actually shooting someone down. But most of all, the designer's want Falcon 4 to be more than just a game for sim aficionados.

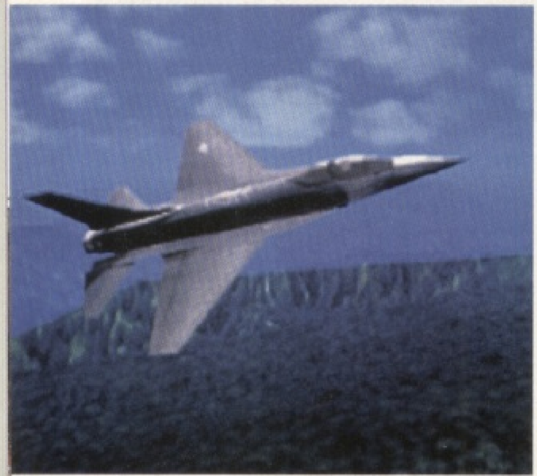
Falcon 4 is completely new code. You're still a member of an air force squadron and the game retains the realism, depth and vitality of Falcon 3. But, as you can see, Falcon 4 sets new standards in graphics. The Falcon team is currently creating a 3D rendered virtual operations centre and the idea is that you'll be able to walk around your airbase using a first-person perspective view. As you enter the centre you'll be met and guided through the game by AI personalities.

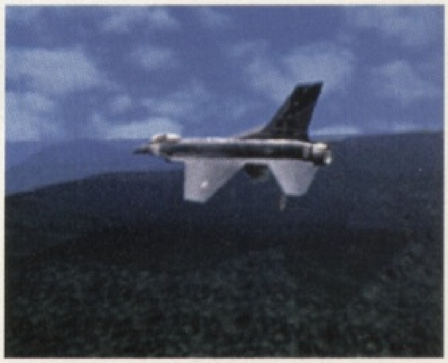
"Let's say, for example, that you are a new player," suggests Neil. "You would sign up, choose your squadron and when you are shipped to the 3D airbase, the system generates a virtual captain who gives you a tour. If you're a more experienced player, the system will generate a major and you'll skip the tour and head straight for the briefing room.

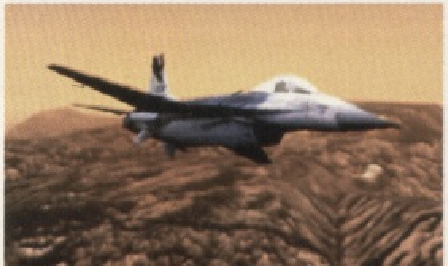
"If you need flight training, the lessons will be conducted using various multimedia techniques and will work on the 'See it, hear it, do it' principle. What this basically means is that a voice will explain the major functions of the F-16 instrument layout, and then there will be a walkthrough that shows you how to take off and land. After the basics you then continue your flight training in a two-seater trainer aircraft, where a computer-controlled instructor will talk you through the necessary procedures. We think this is going to be much more fun than propping 200 pages of flight manual on your knee."

Finally, the other major difference between Falcon 3 and Falcon 4 is that the campaign will run in real-time whenever you are in the base. While the game is running the war continues. You can fly out over the terrain and pass a column of tanks and when you fly back, say, two hours later, the tanks will still be there but two hours further on. The design team are retaining the realistic air-to-air side of the game, but are beefing up the air-to-ground side considerably.

Falcon 4 is due to hit the shelves towards Christmas and if that all seems far too long to wait, you can catch a glimpse of what might lay in store when we take a look at the sexy-looking Top Gun in the next issue.







A saucy selection of saliva-inducing screenshots from the forthcoming Falcon 4. Doesn't it look *fantastic?*Spectrum Holobyte hope to make it more accessible to novices than Falcon 3 was, which can only be a good thing to those of us who don't like memorising 400 keyboard commands.

Not Only But Also...

Gunship 3000

Okay, there are no real plans for this one, but Jim Day the producer for 1944: Across The Rhine and a man who worked on Gunship 2000, has speculated that Gunship 3000 or some kind of helicopter game is definitely on the cards. Quite what these cards are and when they'll appear is still a mystery, but we can safely guess that Gunship 3000 (or whatever they choose to call it) will have fully texture-mapped terrain, SVGA graphics and one of the best flight models ever seen in a computer game. We'll speculate wildly about this again next issue if you'd like...

1943: European Air War

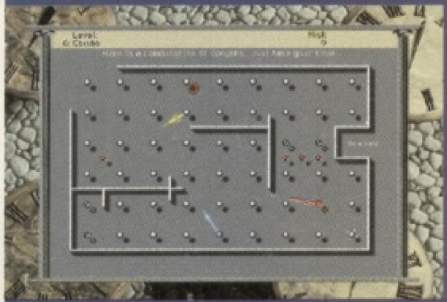
After 1942: Pacific Air War, Ed Fletcher and the team have started work on EAW, or 1943: European Air War. Based in the UK, you'll be able to fly for the RAF or the Luftwaffe, but primarily you'll fly for one of three allied fighter wings — two American squadrons and one British. Details are still sketchy, but EAW might include the Battle Of Britain (as a separate campaign) and the whole thing will probably be in SVGA. So far the air war team are currently upgrading the graphics engine and dabbling with 32-bit protected mode. More news when we get some.

Necrobius

It's a strange one this, a Myst-style game that looks like a Pink Floyd album cover and plays like one of those strange dreams you have after downing too much Tequila. It's puzzle-based, very weird and a bit like Mindscape's Commander Blood. I watched it for ten minutes and I still couldn't work out what was going on.

Aztec

MicroProse in strategy game shock! Yes, it's yet another turn-based strategy game, a Civilization manager sim, with advisers, trade routes, battles, etc. It's a bit like Civilization and Master Of Magic. But it's got Aztecs in it.



Clockwerx

After the huge success of Breakthru! (well, Big Boy Dave liked it anyway), the latest addition to Spectrum Holobyte's action puzzle line is Clockwerx, in which the player must manoeuvre a spinning clock hand from one part of a grid to a gateway that leads to the next, more tricky level. Like Breakthru! it's ridiculously simple and very addictive.

Star Trek: Generations

Don't know too much about this one, I'm afraid, but there was a rumour going round at Spectrum Holobyte that you'd be able to fly around in the Enterprise and then beam down to space stations and walk around them in a first-person perspective. Doom with Star Trek? Is it too good to be true? I've no idea. Generations, based around the latest Star Trek movie, is supposed to be a more action-orientated game, but whether you can shoot Klingons and Kardassians a la Doom is still pure and, I must say, wild conjecture. Still, PC GAMES is good at that.

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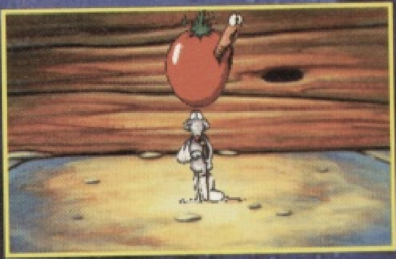

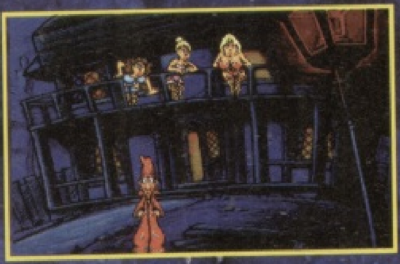

Voice overs (CD ROM Version Only) by ERIC IDLE, TONY ROBINSON, JON PERTWEE & KATE ROBBINS

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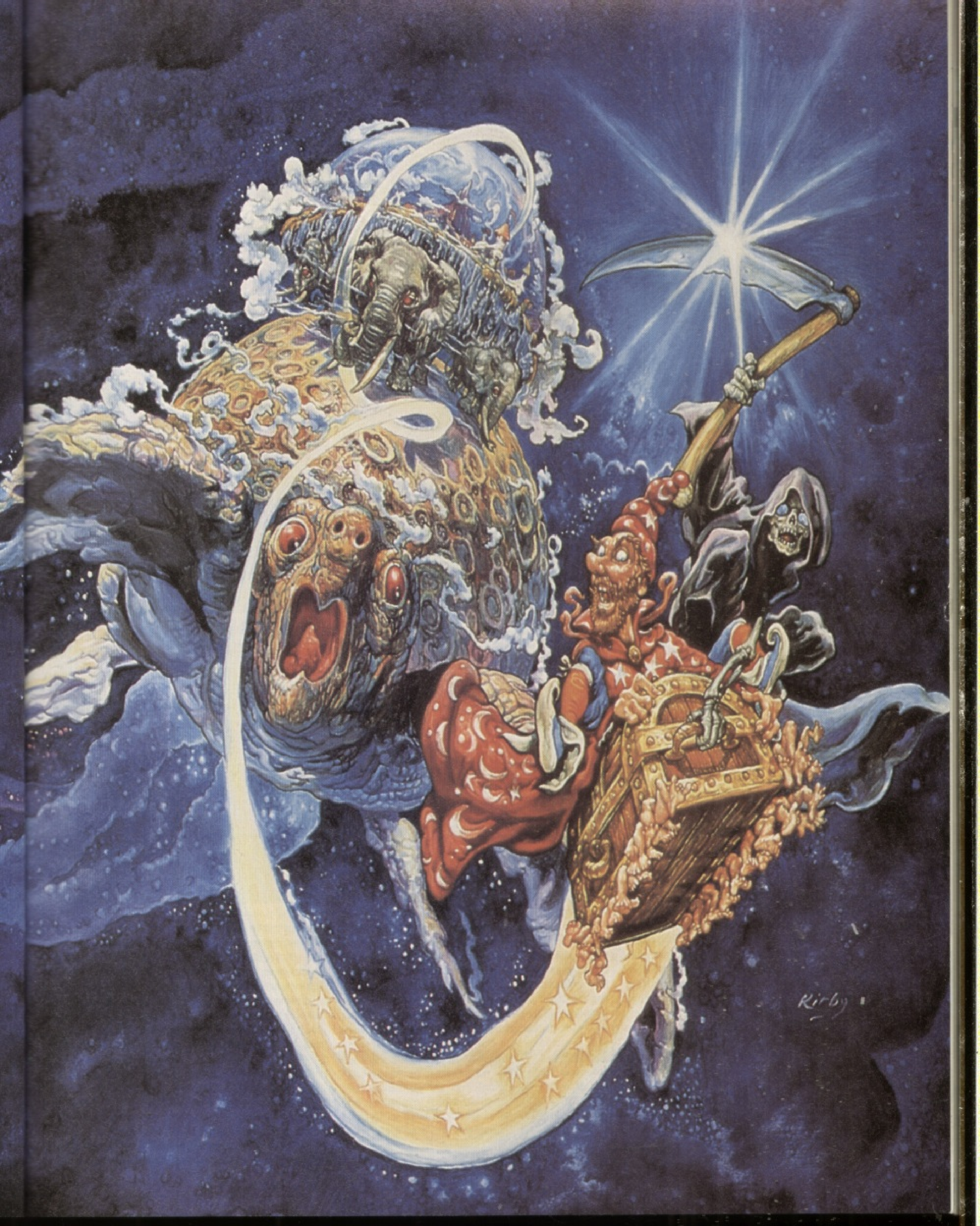
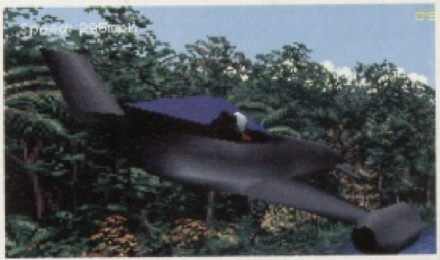
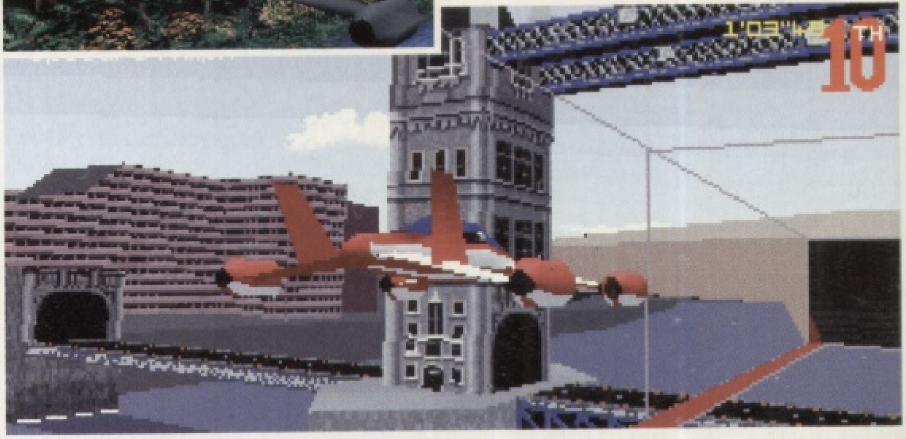

Kirby

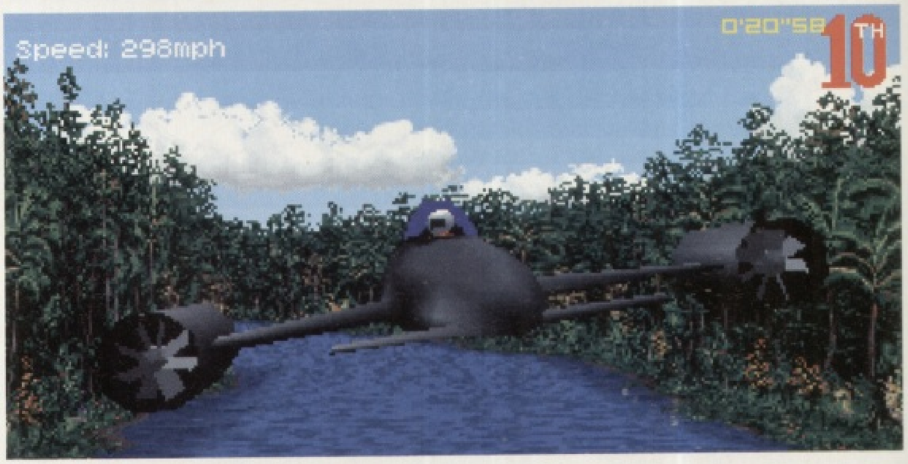
Fast Cars, Fast

Flying at speeds of 300mph IS definitely *not* good for your health, but because Alex Simmons had just got his provisional drivers license, he was nominated to take a ride with Gremlin's futuristic racer.



GAME	SLIPSTREAM 5000 CD
PUBLISHER	GREMLIN INTERACTIVE
DEVELOPER	THE SOFTWARE REFINERY
WORK *STARTED*	OCTOBER 1993
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	APRIL 1995



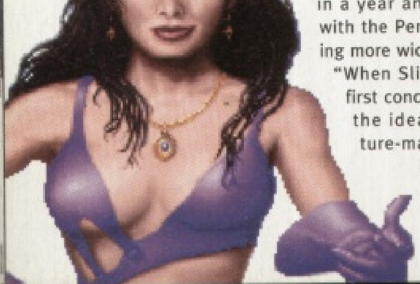


Following speedily in the wake of the Voxel-Spaced shoot-'em-up Retribution, Gremlin Interactive are revving up the engine of their 99%-complete 3D racer, Slipstream 5000. The Sheffield-based softoco promise a dazzling white-knuckle ride through tight, winding canyons and over sprawling cityscapes. But will Slipstream be the fastest rollercoaster ride of '95 or just another Sunday drive in the country?

Slipstream is a futuristic racing game, one which resembles Electronic Arts' archaic Powerdrome. Like the vintage Atari ST racer, Slipstream is a fast-paced dash through undulating tunnels. And pyramids. And dense jungle. In fact, Slipstream is everything Powerdrome ever was, plus a whole lot more.

The game is the result of three industry vets (*not* the kind who operate on rabid dogs!), namely the programming talents of Ian Martin and Ciaran Gultnieks and the artistic skills of Mark 'Griff' Griffiths, collectively known as The Software Refinery. The threesome are all ex-MicroProse bods and have previously worked on titles too numerous to mention, although their list of impressive credentials includes games like B-17 and Shuttle. However, Slipstream 5000 is The Software Refinery's debut release, and is their first major project since the three of them formed the company some 18 months ago.

The Software Refinery have been working on Slipstream for almost 18 months, and had no problem finding a buyer for the game. Griff explains the course of history: "We approached various companies with the game but finally settled with Gremlin. The first meeting was back in October 1993, when we showed them some artwork and a couple of demos which illustrated the power of our 3D engine." The basic concept of the game came from The Software Refinery, although they collaborated closely with Gremlin on the project. Ideas were constantly contributed by both companies, and so the game gradually evolved into its current state.



Since its conception, Slipstream has gone through some dramatic changes. After all, a lot can happen in a year and half, what with the Pentium becoming more widely available. "When Slipstream was first conceived we had the idea to use texture-mapped graphics, but not extensively — originally the game was going to use Gouraud-shaded polygons mainly," says Griff. "But as time went by, the game gradually became more and more texture-mapped, and the introduction of more powerful machines allowed us to create much bigger and better things."

What's more, Slipstream was initially set in the city, with the player racing along busy streets lined with skyscrapers, but this drastically changed when the idea of making Slipstream a futuristic racer was proposed. "Originally it was meant to be set on urban tracks, with polygon buildings and stuff like that", says Griff. "Then we had a flash of inspiration, and decided to use textures which allowed us to build canyons, fjords, and mountains. We tried it out and it worked — beautifully."

The finished game features some 10 texture-mapped tracks from across the globe. Slipstreamers (the name given to the drivers) will compete on tracks carved through the Egyptian Pyramids (I bet the Pharaohs are turning in their tombs!), along the River Thames and past Tower Bridge, and across the bustling streets of the Windy City, Chicago. Other locations include night-time Tokyo, with neon signs provide the only form of illumination, and the winding river Amazon, where racers skim through the dense South American rainforests.

Even though the majority of the courses feature huge underground straights and twisting passages, stretches of the circuit are wide enough to overtake, giving plenty of opportunity to nip past the guy in front on the inside of a corner. Alternatively, you can just push down on the accelerator, pull back on the stick and zoom over the top of your opponent — after all,

ter Women...

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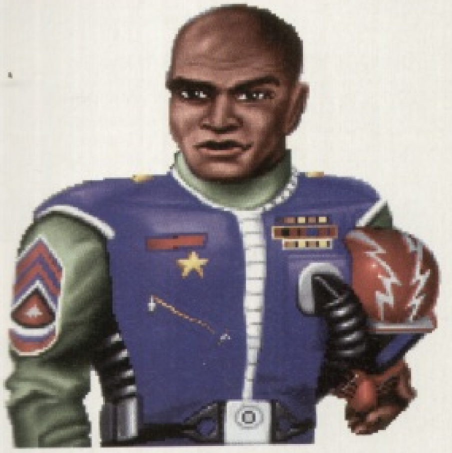
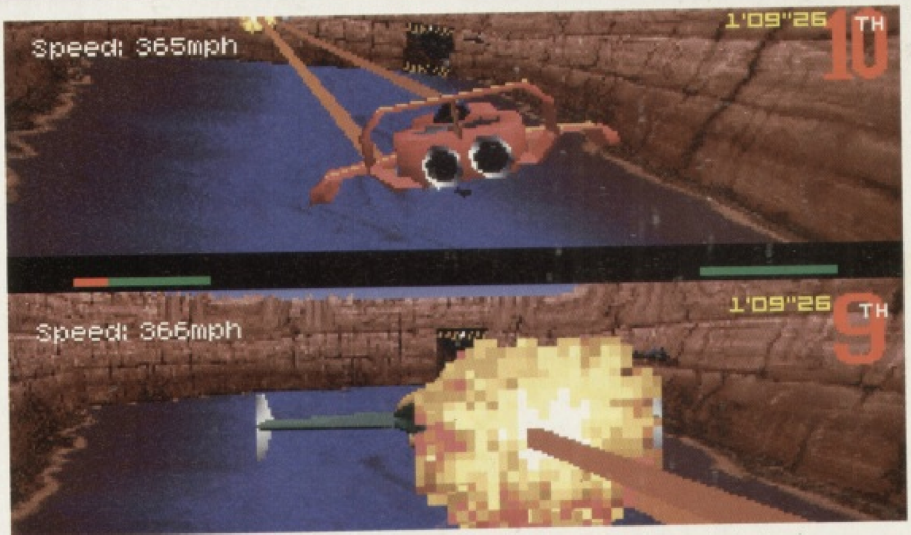
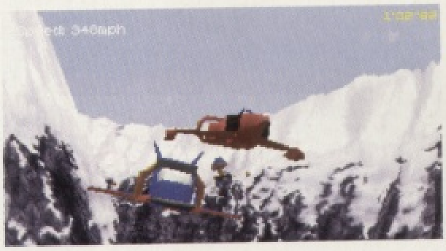
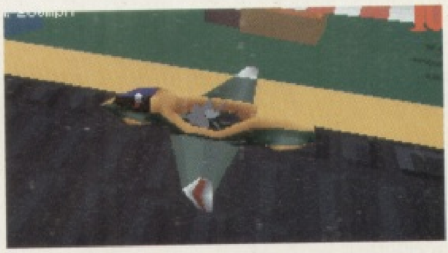


> ***"Originally the game was going to use Gouraud-shaded polygons mainly. But as time went by, the game gradually became more and more texture-mapped, and the introduction of more powerful machines allowed us to create bigger and better things."***
>
> Mark 'Griff' Griffiths, The Software Refinery's Graphic Artist.



(Above) Slipstream features an exciting split-screen two-player option, as well as a four-player mode via network.
(Below) Race along 10 tracks from around globe, including the ice canyons of Siberia and through the pyramids of Egypt.





you are *flying* your 'car'! Many of the courses are actually set outside too, although you're not free to fly completely off the track and explore the area 100 miles south of the circuit!

As mentioned before, each track is given a more realistic feel thanks to copious texture-mapping, and because of this Griff believes Slipstream looks a lot more like a sim, and is arguably more authentic than many flight simulators: "[In Slipstream] you get a *real* sense of speed..."

All this cosmetic beauty doesn't come cheap though, and that's why Slipstream 5000 is primarily aimed at top-end PCs, either the 486DX2 or more preferably a Pentium. On either of these machines, the game runs smoothly with both detail and texture-map levels on maximum — to say it looks impressive is an understatement. However, for those of us mere mortals who only possess a 33MHz 486, it's possible to compromise detail for speed. For example, the texture-mapping can be reduced to a bare minimum to make the game run smoothly, although it doesn't have to be switched off completely.

There are ten vehicles to pick from, all looking like something out of a '50s style B-movie — with their huge over-emphasised jets and brightly coloured bulbous fuselages, it's all *very* Flash Gordon. The pilots have unique personalities too which, combined with specifications of their vehicle, affect the way they handle — some speed-freaks are reluctant to brake and so have a high top speed, while you'll find more careful drivers are better at cornering.

The ships can be customised with a variety of power-ups bought from race winnings. Engine modifications can be bolted on to improve top-speed and acceleration, while armour is strapped to a ship to increase the usually-short life-expectancy of a Slipstreamer. Weapons are available in all shapes and sizes, ranging from laser blasters to homing missiles, although the powerful Disrupter cannon is much more exciting — a successful hit will fuse the target's navigation systems and send the unfortunately pilot spiralling into the canyon wall!

No matter how much money who've saved up though, you can't win a race without refuelling. Unlike entering a pit lane, you don't actually have to grind to a halt before some greasy mechanic pours a few gallons of four-star in your tank. Instead the ships are recharged by zipping along the refuelling lane, the power cells topped up as a lightning bolt thunders through your ship — thank God you're wearing rubber underpants! On top of the standard championship season, Slipstream also offers a head-to-head split-screen game for two-players, as well as a four-player mode via a network.

During both the race and the instant replay there are free-roaming cameras which provide a view on almost every angle of the action, allowing you to see each stage of the course at any time. Cinematic cutscenes storyboard the career of your pilot, complemented by an atmospheric soundtrack created by award-winning composer Chris Adams.

According to The Software Refinery, "Slipstream is almost complete, although the gameplay needs tweaking". 'Tweaking' should hopefully take about a month, so we hope to receive a review copy of Slipstream for the next issue of of PC GAMES.

preview

Small Wonder

David Upchurch, The Man With The Fat, takes a look at the whip-wielding archaeologist's newest adventure.

The two words 'LucasArts' and 'innovation' have become almost synonymous, but even by the California-based company's own ground-breaking and rival-confounding standards its forthcoming game, Indiana Jones And His Desktop Adventures, has to rank as a brave and very unusual release.

A Windows-based adventure, Indy Desktop places you firmly in the scuffed shoes of the world's most famous archaeologist, Indiana Jones, as he races against an unscrupulous Dutch rival, Dr Victor Van Loon, to recover sacred artifacts from the Mexican jungle, an area rich with treasures left behind by long-extinct Indian tribes such as the Mayans, Mixtecs, Toltecs and Aztecs.

Of course, LucasArts is not exactly a stranger to the adventure market, but Indy Desktop is a far cry from the lavish multimedia extravaganzas it normally produces. For a start, the whole game is viewed from a top-down perspective, with Indy depicted as a squat, cartoon-ish sprite.

The mouse-driven interface is extremely simple too — Indy starts conversations or fights simply by bumping into people, while objects are examined or moved in a similar manner. Collectible objects are stored in an inventory panel to the side of the map window, and can be used on other objects by clicking and dragging.

But perhaps most amazing is the fact that Indy Desktop comes on just one disk — and that's not a spelling mistake, either. Unbelievably, when many companies find it nearly impossible to squeeze their games onto one CD, LucasArts have managed to pack Indy Desktop onto a single HD floppy!

LucasArts claims that Indy Desktop offers players literally millions of distinct adventures, each of which can be completed in an hour or less. "Traditionally, desktop games for Windows have been along the lines of word, board, card or very abstract games," says Hal Barwood, the game's project leader. "Indiana Jones And His Desktop Adventures is for people who like adventure games, but don't always have 40 hours free to finish one. Each game can be won in under an hour and then a new game, with new characters, puzzles and treasures, can be started."

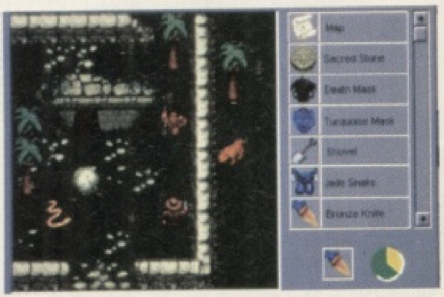
Although there are only fifteen scenario 'types', which range from rescuing a wise shaman to recovering mystical Indian treasures to locating a sacred temple, a unique World Generator engine ensures that the way each scenario develops is totally different.

According to LucasArts: "At the start of each game, the engine creates a new adventure for Indy by mixing and matching hundreds of variables, including multiple treasures for which Indy must search, numerous gaming locations, various types of puzzles, a range of enemies, and a large number of tools and weapons to help solve the game. As the World Generator builds each new scenario, it checks to make sure that no single puzzle is being re-used from the last game, and it disallows the previous ten final quests."

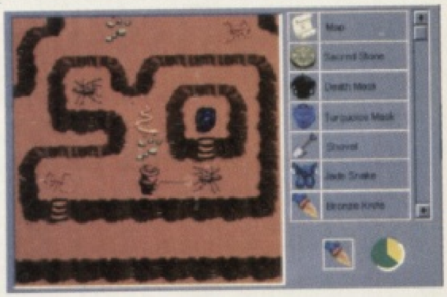
"We believe this product will appeal to a broad audience," adds Mary Bihr, Director Of Marketing. "Traditional adventure gamers will enjoy Indy's varied escapades, while the game's accessible nature should attract new gamers who can play the short game scenarios at home, during work breaks or on the road."

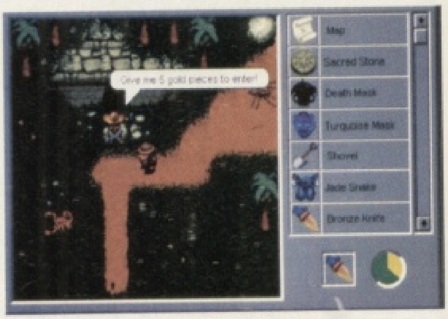
Although Indy Desktop may not look *that* impressive, don't let than put you off. Having played it briefly at the recent CES, I can testify that it's as entertaining and as addictive as any of LucasArts' more visually-lavish adventures. Goodbye lunch-times...

GAME	INDIANA JONES/DESKTOP ADVENTURES
PUBLISHER	LUCASARTS
DEVELOPER	IN-HOUSE
WORK *STARTED*	EARLY 1994
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	EASTER 1995

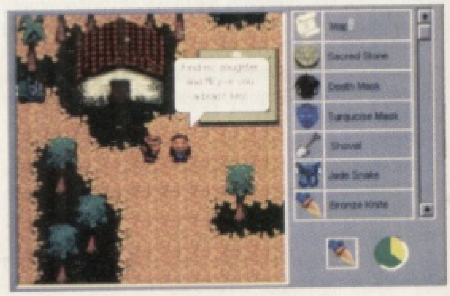


(Above) Initially armed with whip and gun, Indy can also fight his enemies using any other weapons he finds along the way.





(Above) Indy starts conversations by simply bumping into people. However, if the person they bump into is unfriendly, the game automatically goes into combat mode.



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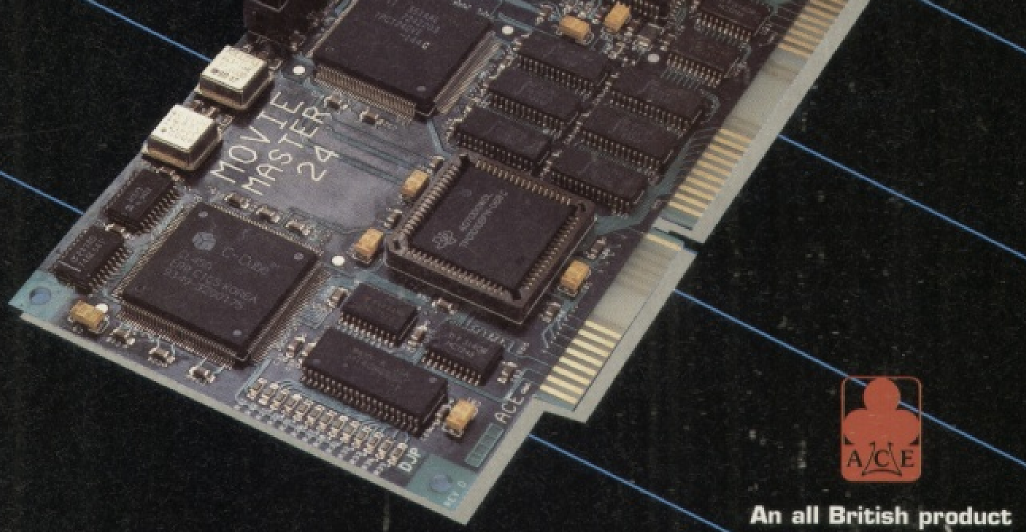

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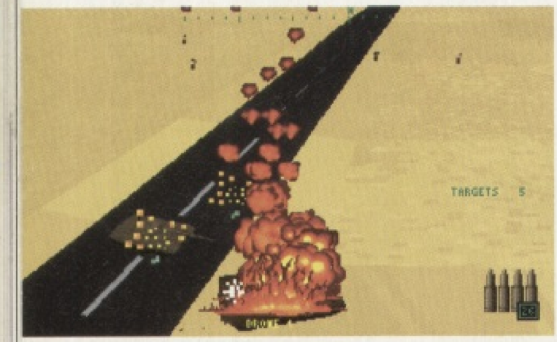
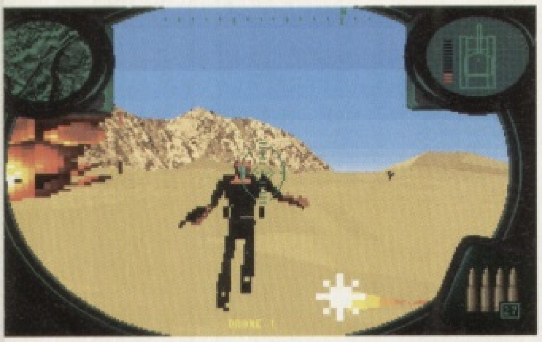
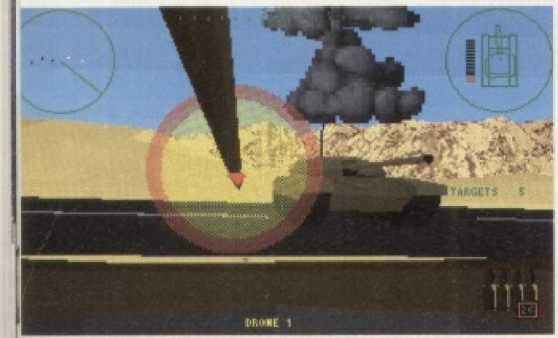
Barrels Of

Calling all tread-heads! Here's a fascinating piece of tank-related trivia which you can bore your friends with! Do you know why tanks are called, er, tanks? No? Well, when they were first brought into service in World War One, the British army was naturally quite keen to avoid warning the Germans that a terrifying new weapon was about to be unleashed upon them. So, when the armoured gun platforms were shipped to the front-lines, they were covered in tarpaulin and labelled 'water tanks' to confuse any enemy spies — hence the name! Incredible, eh?

And it's no doubt such fascinating little anecdotes like that one (culled from the Charley's War comic strip in Battle Comic, if you're interested) that inspired developers The Big Red Software Company to create Tank Commander, an action-packed simulation of all things metallic and big-gunned. Or, if the comments of Paul Ranson, Big Red's MD, are anything to go by, maybe it wasn't...







"The problem with tanks," laments Paul Ranson, the company's Managing Director, "is that they're a bit *boring*. In real life they don't trundle down the middle of the road, guns a-blazing — instead, they find a place to hide, wait for the enemy to go past and then they shoot at them. So we had to find a way to make them more exciting..."

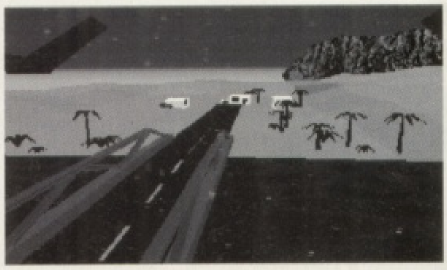
To achieve this, Big Red have taken a few, ahem, 'liberties' with the subject material. For a start, the tank that you control (which is nominally based on the Challenger tank — "mainly because Vickers are the only company we've talked to" adds Ranson) is equipped with an array of exotic weaponry — including flamethrowers, for goodness sake! — that you'd never see on a 'normal' tank.

And although the gameworld and the 3D objects are accurately modelled, the boys at Big Red were forced to make a few graphical 'tweaks' in the name of good gameplay. "Because tanks are a lot bigger than you actually think they are," explains Ranson, "we had to made some of the other objects in the game bigger than they should really be. Take the soldiers, for example — if we'd drawn them to scale with the tanks, they'd have been so small you wouldn't have been able to see any detail on them."

Other examples of 'artistic license' in the game were unavoidable, however. Although Big Red had a great deal of technical assistance from Vickers, the manufacturers of the Challenger tank, there were some aspects of the hardware that they just couldn't talk about. When Big Red's artists came to draw the 'in-tank' graphics, for instance, they were somewhat held back by the fact that Vickers couldn't actually let them look inside a Challenger tank. "Apparently it's Top Secret," explains Ranson, "so we just had to make up what it looked like!"

GAME	TANK COMMANDER^{CD}
PUBLISHER	DOMARK
DEVELOPER	THE BIG RED SOFTWARE CO.
WORK *STARTED*	SUMMER 1994
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	APRIL 1995

(Below) At any time you can deploy a chopper to go on a recce flight over the enemy's position, allowing you to get the low-down on their fortifications.



> **"ESSENTIALLY WE WANTED TO WRITE A VERSION OF BATTLEZONE FOR THE 90S."**
>
> Paul Ranson, MD of The Big Red Software Co.

But while sim buffs are no doubt starting to get hot under the collar about all this fiddling and fudging, it's worth remembering that Big Red never intended Tank Commander to be a hyper-realistic tank sim which would compete with the MicroProse games of this world. "Essentially we wanted to write a version of Battlezone for the 90s," comments Ranson. Although Tank Commander does contain sim elements, Ranson and team's main aim was to create an exciting, fun yet challenging action game with strategy overtones.

As with most sim-style games, Tank Commander takes the form of a series of campaigns set in various exotic trouble-spots across the world, thus providing an excuse for a wide degree of graphical variety. Each campaign consists of a series of linked missions, each with their own set of objectives. The type of missions vary from the usual 'destroy all enemy units' blasts, to more intellectually-challenging outings where you have to, say, protect a convoy of trucks or defend a base from enemy attack.

Although you start out with just one tank under your control, as the game progresses you are given more to command, up to a maximum of four, at which point tactics and strategy comes more to the fore. It's worth noting that everything happens in real-time, and things can get pretty intense as you struggle to give orders to your fellow tank commanders while simultaneously trying to avoid enemy fire.

While Tank Commander promises to be a lot of fun when played solo (especially for people like myself, who don't like having to wade through a 100-page manual before they can start blowing things up), it should be a killer in multi-player mode, which allows up to four tank commanders to battle against each other via a network or modem/serial link. "You'll fight in sort of 'combat arenas'," says Ranson. "If you remember the old Combat game on the Atari VCS you'll have some idea of what it'll be like."

With Tank Commander nearing completion (indeed, we should have a review and a playable demo of it for you next month, fingers crossed), Ranson and his merry band of coders have already started work on their next project. Provisionally entitled Big Red Racing, it's a super-fast Virtua Racing-style game which uses an enhanced version of Tank Commander's 3D engine. Look out for more news on this some time later in the year...

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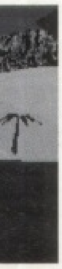

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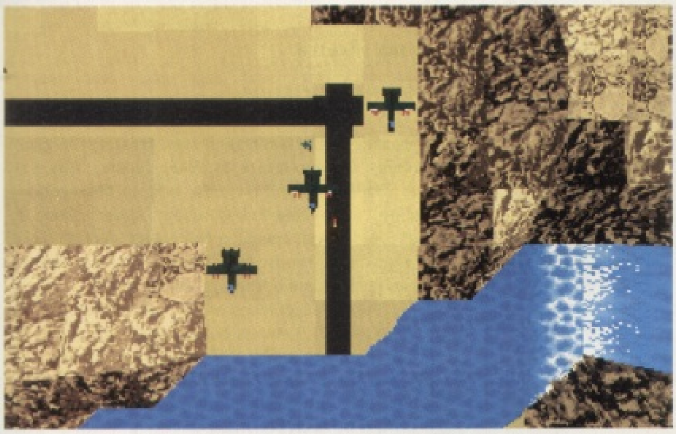
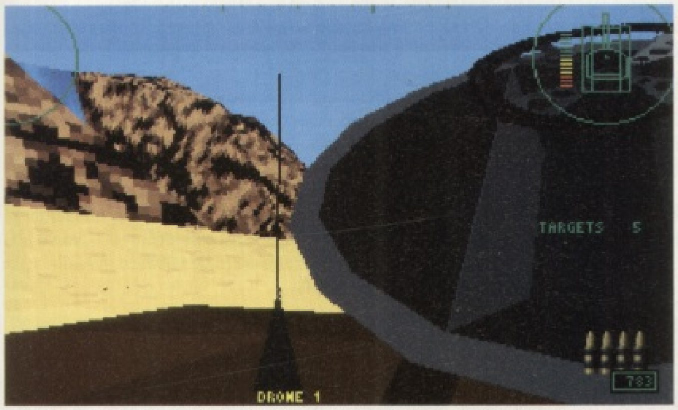
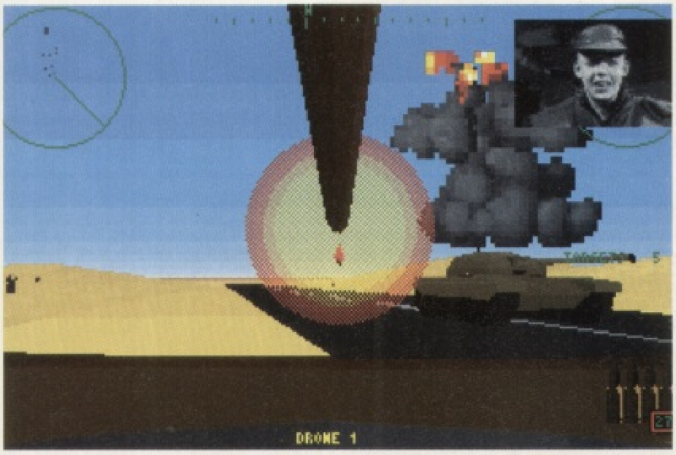


In Tank Commander you have the option to call in a limited number of air-strikes, which effectively act like smart bombs, wiping out any enemy units in your tank's vicinity.



Tank Commander boasts a vast number of in- and out-of-tank views, including this one from the open turret hatch. "It's a bit unrealistic," admits Ranson, "because you'd never be stupid enough to stick your head out of a tank when you're in combat..."



To maintain the game's speed on low-end machines, the 3D engine simply reduces how far the player can see into the distance. The texture maps can also be turned off for extra 'oomph'.

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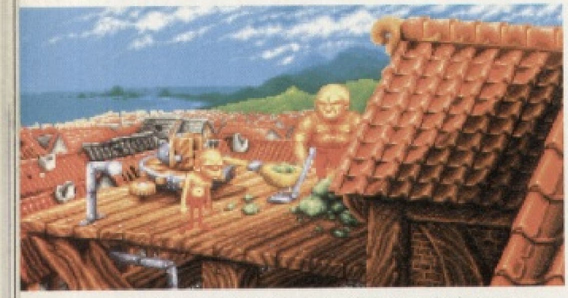
The Hat *Is Back!*

Simon the Sorcerer returns to fight off stiff competition from Psygnosis' Discworld. Can Adventure Soft out-wit Pratchett's wicked humour? Alex Simmons takes a look...

GAME	SIMON THE SORCERER II
PUBLISHER	ADVENTURE SOFT
DEVELOPER	IN-HOUSE
WORK *STARTED*	JANUARY 1994
DUE FOR *COMPLETION*	APRIL 1995

It's a brave software developer that dares to take on the might of LucasArts, but that's what Adventure Soft did with Simon The Sorcerer, a witty and very *British* response to the antics of Guybrush Threepwood and co. Simon was the brainchild of Simon Woodroffe, a university graduate who formed Birmingham-based Adventure Soft with his dad, Mike. And now, somewhat unsurprisingly, Simon is also heavily involved in creating the sequel which, we're promised, will be a much bigger game in every sense — more characters, locations, puzzles... the lot.



Fail to pay your taxes and the bailiffs won't bother to come round - they'll just bomb your house with boulders!

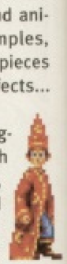
The team behind Simon The Sorcerer has grown since the first game — replacing the original two-man band tapping away in a darkened room is team of talented workers who live across the whole country. Six graphic artists, who are responisble for the in-game graphics and all the box and advertising artwork, are shacked up in the North-East while the two programmers, Alan Bridgman and Chris Downs, can be found beavering away on their trusty 486s down in Bristol.

The first Simon The Sorcerer was compared by many to Terry Pratchett's Discworld novels (which is hardly surprising, considering Adventure Soft actually bid for the licence but were refused). So when Psygnosis announced the official Discworld game, weren't Adventure Soft frightened by the competition? Mike Woodroffe isn't worried: "My attitude is that we need more quality fantasy/comedy products. Monkey Island 2 was funny, Day Of The Tentacle was funny, but LucasArts only do one game every 18 months, the same as us — the market will stand five or six of these a year."

Fair enough, I suppose — if one company manages to arouse the interest of the public, surely it will be beneficial to other, similar games? Mike agrees: "I'm delighted Psygnosis are reputedly spending £150,000 on the promotion of Discworld — that's great! It will hopefully expand the market by introducing more people to the genre."

For those already familiar with fantasy adventures and indeed Simon The Sorcerer, it's important to stress that quite a few things have changed since the original. The long list of control verbs have been replaced with icons, speeding up the whole process of guiding Simon through the game's puzzles.

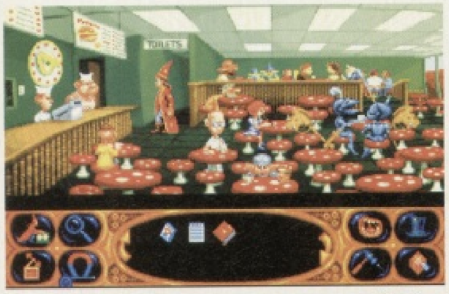
The graphics have been spruced-up, too. Scrolling backdrops have now been included, and are entered by clicking on the two-screen map. Creating the graphics was a mammoth task, as Mike explains: "There are over 100 background pictures, over 50 thousand animation clips, some five thousand speech samples, over 100 different speaking characters, over 50 pieces of music and hundreds of digitised sound effects... and buckets and buckets of swamp goo!"



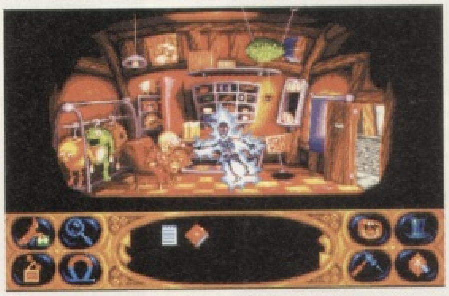
The story continues on from where the original left off. Simon is being pursued through time and space by the arch-villain Sordid, who was released from limbo by a troll kid called Runt. Runt, having summoned Sordid by accident when dabbling in black magic, has now joined forces with The Evil One™ and plans to ensnare Simon and bring him back to their world in a Magic Wardrobe!

As you can probably tell, much of the humour which made Simon 1 such fun returns in the sequel. Many of the characters from the original game also star, including Calypso, the two demons Max and Gerald, and even the little swampling who has now opened a fast food restaurant!

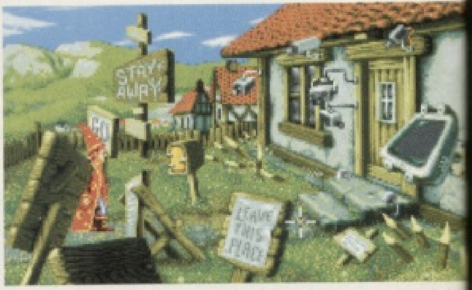
Appearing on floppy and CD, the latter will again feature the vocal talents of Chris Barrie and Roger Blake, but as yet the thousands upon thousands of lines of dialogue have not been recorded — you'll just have to wait for the game to be released in April to hear the result...



The swampling returns in Simon The Sorcerer 2, and this time round he's opened a fast food restaurant!



Simon 2 uses a completely new interfaces which is even more user-friendly. What's it's just as humourous as ever!



This is the house of the Three Bears, and after their encounter with Goldilocks they don't take kindly to trespassers.

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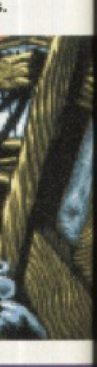

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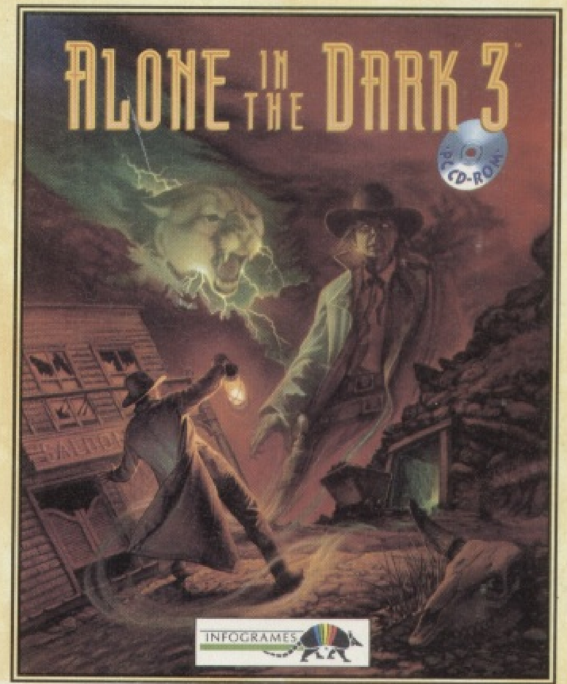

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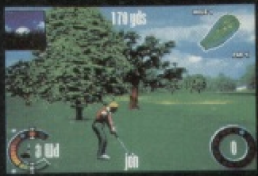
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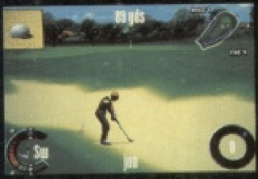
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reviews

MonitorMan™

At this time of the year good games are usually rarer than a Lottery win — but this month we've been forced to award no less than FIVE games a PC GAMES STAR!

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Discworld	Psygnosis	64
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UFO: Terror From The Deep	MicroProse	40
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HOW WE DO WHAT WE DO...

Everyone at PC GAMES is a complete gaming nut. That's why we know exactly what you want to see in a game review (or so we like to think).
So what do you get?

Well, you get all the info you need and no waffling — we get straight to the point. On top of that you get loads of big screenshots of the game in action, along with maps and diagrams helpfully illustrating any major gameplay features — after all a picture, as they say, speaks a thousand words.

Then we compare the big games with another of similar type in the 'It's A Bit Like...' panel. Typically this will be the best game in its genre so you'll probably be pretty familiar with it, thus giving you a handy point of reference.

The whole PC GAMES team plays every game reviewed and, although only one person's name appears on each review, the criticisms and Overall mark reflect all of our combined opinions, hopefully giving you a balanced view. Should any team member disagree violently with the rest, his comments will appear in a special box in the review.

Finally, we have the essential score panel...

All the guff you need to know about who publishes the game, who developed it, its price and when it's due to be released. You even get a contact 'phone number to call if you want more info.

Details the minimum machine specification as recommended by the software company, along with how much valuable hard disk space it takes up and what optional peripherals it'll recognise.

The game's good and bad points, which are basically a concise summary of the criticisms made in the main review.

The Overall Score. We don't see any point in ratings for playability and all that other stuff — you get one mark to sum everything up and that's it.

The coveted PC GAMES STAR is awarded to any game scoring 90% or over, indicating that the game in question is an essential addition to any gamesplayer's software collection.

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MINIMUM SPEC

50MHz 486, VGA, 8Mb RAM, 20Mb of hard disk space, double-speed CD-ROM drive and joystick.

ALSO SUPPORTS

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THE GOOD...

- At last — an 'interactive movie' that actually looks like a movie.
- The dogfighting is tense, exciting and looks fabulous.
- Intriguing plot that keep you hooked from the start.
- Superb SVGA graphics and excellent sound.

...AND THE BAD

- Needs a monster PC to run at anything near a playable speed.
- The missions lack depth and variety.

Overall

92%

review

PC GAMES STAR

X-COM

Terror From The Deep

Lobstermen? Deep Ones? Dean Evans strips off and goes for a dip with MicroProse's watery sequel to UFO.

If you've ever seen an episode of the X-Files on BBC 2, you'll know that FBI agent Fox Mulder just can't seem to convince his partner, Dana Sculley, about the existence of aliens. Despite the fact that they have been attacked by microscopic alien bugs, seen an astronaut possessed by a space demon and investigated abductions where the only evidence is a strange light in the sky and suspiciously large burn marks in the grass, Dana is still a fully paid-up UFO sceptic.

And who can blame her? If extraterrestrials do exist, then they aren't exactly going out of their way to be noticed. Modern UFO sightings are usually dismissed as cloud formations or weather balloons, UFO abductees are cruelly ridiculed and rumours that the American military has made contact with aliens and even retrieved a crashed UFO back in the 1950s are laughed at and rigorously denied.

But despite all the secrecy and the red tape, aliens continue to fascinate the world, and so it should come as no great surprise to learn that X-COM: Terror From The Deep, a game that deals with UFOs and alien invasion will, I'm certain, prove to be one of the most popular games of the year. You might even dare to call it a classic...

X-COM: Terror From The Deep (TFTD) is the sequel to the highly successful and critically acclaimed strategy game, UFO: Enemy Unknown — and just in case you were wondering, it's called X-COM: Terror From The Deep and not UFO: Terror From The Deep because the original game was branded X-COM in the America and MicroProse wants to universalise the name. Remember when Marathon changed its name to Snickers? Well, it's a bit like that you see.

Anyway, after the alien threat was snuffed out in the original game, X-COM has been slowly disbanded. But despite the fact that Cydonia, the alien base, was destroyed, it appears that an alien transport vessel, the T'Leth, is still sitting at the bottom of the ocean, and as the years drag on, its computers have started to release small groups of aliens to attempt a colonisation of the Earth. So far their plans haven't been successful, but as TFTD begins, the T'Leth's battle computers have finally come on-line and an alien army of Lobstermen, Aquatoids and big jelly-fish brain things are being revived and awakened to terrorise the planet.

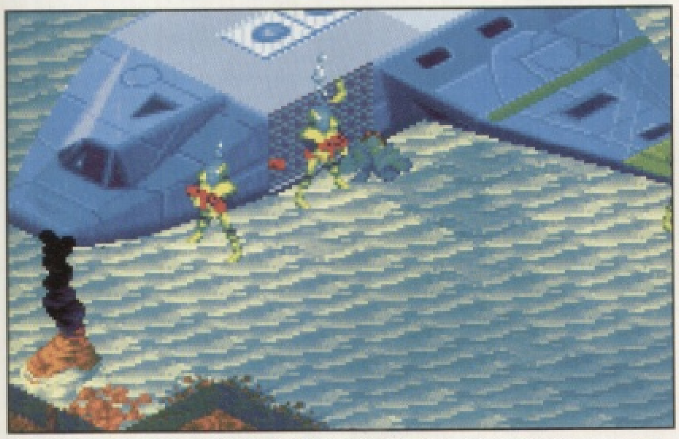
Like the first game, the gameplay in TFTD is fairly basic and, again, it involves building a number of bases around the world so you can track and shoot down the UFO menace. Once an alien submarine has been detected nearby, you simply dispatch one of your heavily-armed Barracuda submarines to intercept it and, if you manage to force the UFO down, you can then send out a Triton transport sub, complete with a crew of highly-trained aquanauts, to search the crash site for surviving aliens and new, exciting technologies.

At the crash site, the game switches to a Syndicate-style isometric-3D view and each sea-bed encounter is played out on a turn-by-turn basis. Each soldier in your squad has a certain number of 'action points' which are used up by moving, turning and firing. And as each aquanaut has their own particular stats that determine firing accuracy, strength, etc, they all perform in different ways. In fact, the combat system is very reminiscent of a table-top wargame, and so line-of-sight rules, how you choose to fire, terrain types and troop morale all affect the way your soldiers perform in battle.

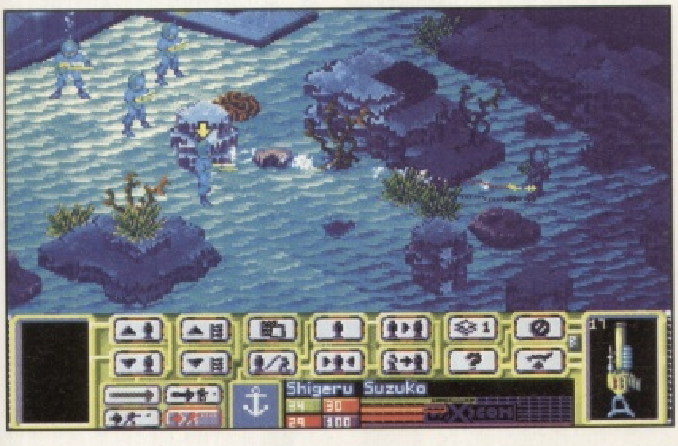
Obviously, the idea is to kill (or capture) the aliens without losing any of your men, and once the crash site is secure, you can then retrieve the submarine and any alien corpses that you find and carry them back for study at your base. Analysing the alien artefacts is very important, because as the aliens have such an advantage over you in terms of technology, you can only fight them in the long-term by researching their weaponry and using it against them. You can't fight a modern army with spears and shields, and likewise you can't defeat the evil alien fish-legions with your ineffective harpoon rifles and dart guns.

This is the where the resource-management part of the game kicks in, and as the months fly by you've got to balance the X-COM budget, funding new labs so you can research more alien technology and constructing more workshop space so you can mass produce what you've researched. In addition to all this, you've also got to have enough money left to cover the day-to-day X-COM overheads, things like fuel, weaponry and ammunition. Nothing is free in TFTD, and if for one reason or another you don't do a good job, countries may well withdraw their funding, making it even more difficult for you to counter the alien threat.

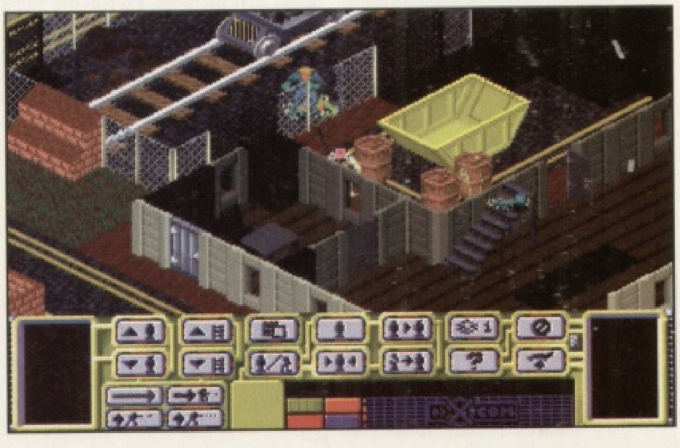
And although I've simplified things a bit, that's really all there is to it. To succeed in TFTD you've got to keep shooting down alien subs, so you can nab their weapons and research their technology. Only by doing this will you uncover the sinister alien plot (this is something about a Great Dreamer, so I'm told) and the way to defeat it. Of course, I'm not going to tell you what it is, because half the fun of playing TFTD is watching the plot unfold, discovering new weapons and battling the new monsters. Like UFO, TFTD gets better the longer you play it. It's not a game

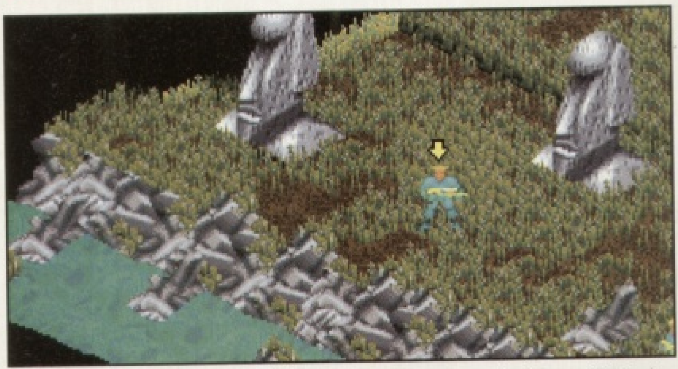


(Above) As you progress through the game you can research and develop better armour which bumps up the average life expectancy of your aquanauts.

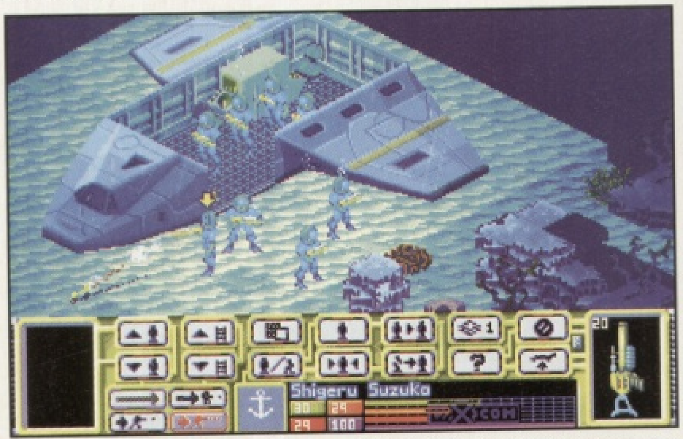


(Below) The animation is TFTD is 10 times more detailed than UFO. Air bubbles rise from your frogmen and harpoons and torpedoes leave a wake when they're fired.

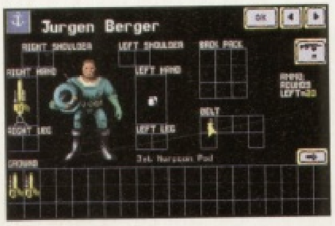




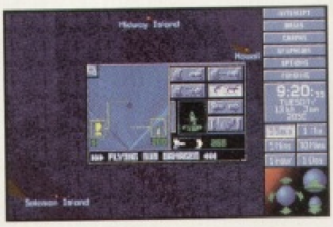
One of the nicer things about TFTD is the fact that MicroProse has retained some of the land-based missions. Fighting on land throws up its own tactical problems, in that most of X-COM's weaponry is optimised for underwater use and so things like torpedoes don't work...



(Below) At the beginning of every mission you get to equip your soldiers for the forthcoming battle. You can carry grenades, thermal flares (for night missions), pistols, etc.

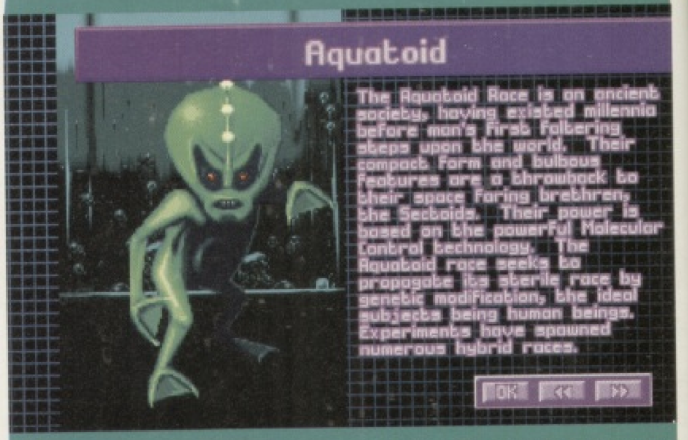


(Below) When your base has spotted an alien sub, you can send out one of your Barracuda interceptors to shoot it down. Simply pick an attack pattern (i.e. cautious) and watch...



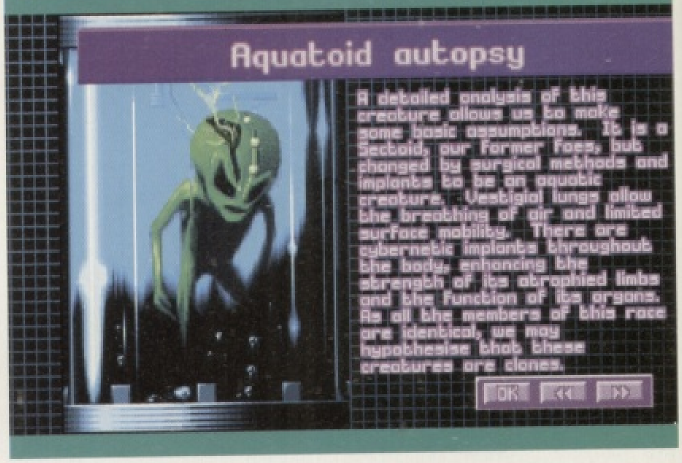
What Makes Them *Tick*?

To get anywhere in TFTD, eventually you're going to have to capture and study the aliens. X-COM is at its best when it nabs and researches alien artefacts. Once you've secured an alien crash site, you can dissect the little bugger to see what makes it tick. Likewise if you find any weapons you can study them and then use them yourself.



Aquatoid

The Aquatoid Race is an ancient society, having existed millennia before man's first faltering steps upon the world. Their compact form and bulbous features are a throwback to their space faring brethren, the Sectoids. Their power is based on the powerful Molecular Control technology. The Aquatoid race seeks to propogate its sterile race by genetic modification, the ideal subjects being human beings. Experiments have spawned numerous hybrid races.



Aquatoid autopsy

A detailed analysis of this creature allows us to make some basic assumptions. It is a Sectoid, our former foes, but changed by surgical methods and implants to be an aquatic creature. Vestigial lungs allow the breathing of air and limited surface mobility. There are cybernetic implants throughout the body, enhancing the strength of its atrophied limbs and the function of its organs. As all the members of this race are identical, we may hypothesise that these creatures are clones.

that you can do justice to in just a mere couple of hours.

Yes, well that's all very nice, but if you've played UFO, you're probably thinking that all this base building, finance juggling and UFO shooting sounds frighteningly familiar. And to a certain extent, you'd be exactly right. At first glance it seems that MicroProse are just trying to crank out an uninspired money-spinner, a game that is practically identical to the first one, bar a couple of new aliens and a bluey-green colour palette. For example, you built bases in UFO, you build floating bases in TFTD. You shot down flying saucers in UFO, you shoot down submarines in TFTD. Hmmm. It *seems* like the same game, but with bubbles.

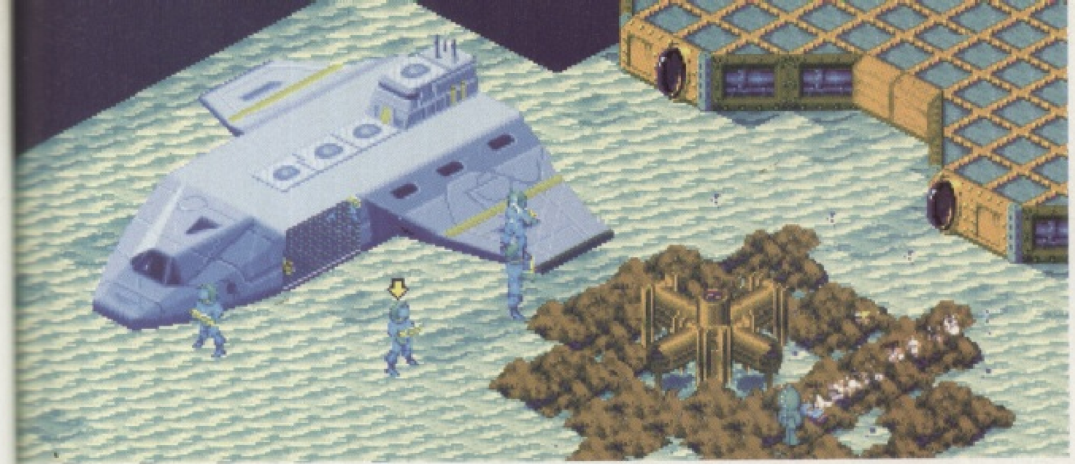
In fact, if you look at it like this, the evidence against TFTD is quite damning. Original? Pah! The underwater aliens are similar in strength and attitude to the first bunch in UFO, and if that wasn't a dead give-away, the weapons are suspiciously similar too. Where UFO had a Stun Bomb, TFTD has a Thermal Shock Bomb that performs exactly the same task. The bog-standard rifle has now become a harpoon gun, there's a watery equivalent of that nifty rocket launcher that allowed you to set waypoints for the rocket to follow, and if all this wasn't brazen enough, the alien power source Elerium has disappeared but it's been replaced with an element called Zrbite, which, as far as I can see, works in exactly the same way. And then, there's the 3D gameplay. That doesn't seem to have changed much either... And then there's the...

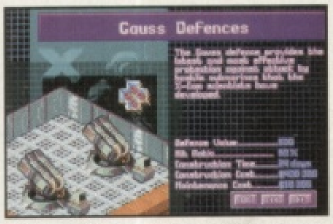
...But — and this is a pivotal, very important 'but' — the mistake that I made with the first game was that I didn't play it for long enough. After three, maybe four days, you can usually get a reasonable feel for a game, but UFO and TFTD are not games that you can effectively sum up and pigeonhole after only a week's play. UFO was a game that grew on you. It developed the more you played it and as the plot unfolded, it hooked you and reeled you into the action. A casual bystander might just see a turn-based strategy game with a bit of tedious resource management, but UFO and TFTD are probably two of the most engaging, challenging and absorbing games you'll ever play on the PC.

In fact, if you haven't played UFO, then TFTD is a stunning game. For starters, it's much harder. The aliens are much more accurate and even though the average firing skill of your aquanauts has improved, it's sometimes not enough to stop your entire squad getting massacred by a sniping lobster in the inky depths of the Pacific. Even

It's a bit like...

...UFO: Enemy Unknown. It's also a bit like Sabre Team, but if you like the look of TFTD and fancy playing the first game, I'm reliably informed that it will soon be appearing in a bargain-priced double pack with MicroProse's futuristic underwater combat sim, Subwar 2050. UFO: Enemy Unknown plays in exactly the same way as TFTD, it's just not as polished as its watery sequel and just that tiny bit easier to complete.





The UFOpaedia contains all the information that you gather throughout the game. Not only can you view your own facilities but you can use it to study the aliens, their weapons and the subs that they travel in.

worse, some of the new aliens are impervious to projectile weapons, so you've got to get right up close to them if you want to do them any damage. Thankfully, there are specialist weapons for this, like the Vibro Blade, but getting near enough to stab an alien in what technically passes for its back, requires a major shift in your tactical thinking.

Compared to UFO, the aliens in TFTD are also more intelligent. They move around a lot more and often make good use of natural cover to snipe at your soldiers. In the original game, the aliens often defended one particular area, like a farmhouse or a hillside. In fact, sometimes they would make no effort to conceal their presence at all, and some of them were so obviously placed that they might as well have a had a huge neon sign flashing above their heads saying "Here I am, shoot me, shoot me".

But this is not the case in TFTD. The aliens are shifty little buggers and they'll hide amongst the rocks, popping out to fire at you, then ducking back in so you can't get even get a shot off. They also have an annoying habit of occupying the high ground, i.e. standing on the top of a shipwreck or a reef to fire down at your soldiers. And when they're as accurate as these guys are, you have to move cautiously if you want your soldiers to survive more than five turns in the combat zone.

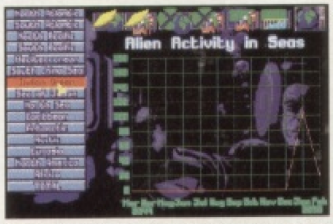
Like UFO, TFTD has five difficulty levels but no matter which one you pick, you'll find that the aliens put their psionic abilities into action from the word go. Psionics and mind control played a big part in the original game, and in TFTD some of the alien races can use their powers to panic your soldiers, sending them hopelessly berserk (they lose all their action points for that turn) or to take control of them completely so that they start firing on the rest of your squad.

You might have just set up your first base and be happily cruising to your first alien intercept, but the Aquatoids, the first of the alien races that you'll encounter, will have no qualms about using their psionic abilities to thwart your attacks. This obviously makes things a lot harder and although it's initially frustrating, it means that you can't afford to hang around in one place. If you keep moving you've got a chance.

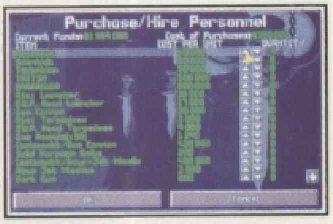
Visually, TFTD is very nice. The blue-green backgrounds are very pretty and the system is realistic enough that the deeper you go, the darker it gets. There are a wide variety of terrain types in the game too and so you can find yourself battling through the wreckage of sunken aircraft, wandering through the ruined pyramids of Atlantis or even defending the port of San Francisco from a Deep One attack. Thankfully, TFTD has retained some land-based missions and this in itself throws up some interesting tactical problems — most of your weapons are designed for underwater use and things like the torpedo launcher and the gas cannon don't function on land.

But when you're in the water, the weapons are very effective. Harpoons and torpedoes leave wakes when they travel through the water and the overall quality of the sprites and the incidental animations on the backdrops (i.e. boiling lava, flashing control panels, air bubbles, etc) are much better than before. The music isn't anything to write home about, although it's quite moody and atmospheric, but the sound effects are massively understated, little more than a couple of whooshes, the odd bang and some screaming from the local populace when the aliens terrorise the shore. Perhaps they'll be some digitised speech in the CD version.

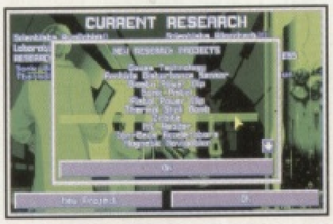
So what's the verdict? Well, initially I thought that TFTD was exactly the same game, but with some different graphics and a brand new soundtrack. But the more I played it, the more I saw that there are subtle, tactical differences. Obviously this won't make a jot of difference to you if you've haven't played UFO before, but I have played it, and although I was a late convert, I can honestly say it was one of the best games I played last year. As for TFTD, if you haven't played UFO before then, as I mentioned earlier, this is a stunning strategy game, perfect in every way. If you're an X-COM veteran, you shouldn't be disappointed but I'm afraid that I can't guarrantee it.

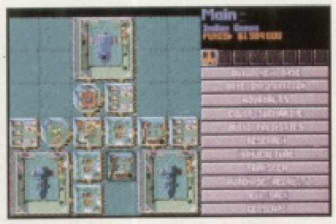


(Above) Studying the helpful X-COM graphs allows you to pinpoint the areas of alien activity so you can build new bases.



(Above) Although X-COM has about $6 million to spend per month, it soons drains away as you hire soldiers and buy new weapons.





I think there's enough of a difference, both graphically and strategically, to defend the score that I've given the game. I like it, and if hardened UFO fans are disappointed with it, then we'll just have to differ. TFTD isn't a whole new game, that's true, but it's not the glorified data disk that I feared that it was either. MicroProse listened to the criticism of the first game, and with TFTD it has built and enhanced the original game engine.

If you're desperately in need of another UFO fix, then TFTD will provide you with a huge amount of entertainment for your money. Unlike many games, it's the sort of thing that you can play for months before you even get close to finishing it.

It may not be the most original sequel ever to appear, but if you missed out on the delights of UFO, why not take command of the Baywatch branch of X-COM and take the plunge against an even tougher alien threat. Despite my earlier misgivings, TFTD is a worthy sequel and a formidable challenge. It's not the kind of game that causes jaw-drop and shirt-dribble, but I think it's destined for cult status nevertheless. And sometimes, you can't get a higher accolade than that.

X-COM: Terror From The Deep

MicroProse/Mythos

(01454) 326532

£TBA Out March

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 10Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- If you thought UFO was difficult, TFTD is sometimes impossible.
- The bluey-green graphics and the animation is excellent.
- It's a game that's great value for money, because you'll still be playing months later.

...AND THE BAD

- It's uncomfortably like the original game, UFO: Enemy Unknown.
- The sound isn't that impressive.

Overall

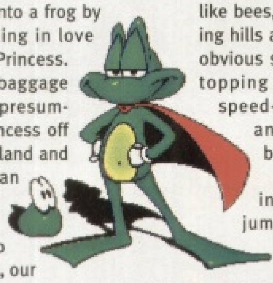
90%

Superfrog

David Upchurch gets into some serious frog kissing — not to find a Prince, but because he's got a bit of an amphibian fetish...

Before Aladdin and Lion King leapt onto the scene late last year, finding a decent platformer on the PC was like trying to find a bogie in your left armpit. So converting Superfrog to the PC from its year-old Amiga counterpart to get in on a fairly untapped market was a pretty inspired idea of Team 17's then eh? Er, actually no, not really.

The scenario tells the touching if rather unfeasible story of a Prince who has been turned into a frog by a witch after falling in love with a gorgeous Princess. This jealous old baggage then whisks the presumably beautiful Princess off to some far away land and bangs her up in an suitably impregnable tower.



Determined to wallow in self-pity, our froggie hero wanders down to his favourite stream to drown his sorrows in a bottle of finest Vimto. But lo and behold, something's afoot, the bottle contains a magical potion and, after one giant froggie gulp, some minor explosions and a good few burps, our amphibian prince transforms into Superfrog, superhero extraordinaire with a dinky red cape, mega strength, speed and courage and the best jump your going to find this side of Watford!

The game begins with you leaping into our young green-skin's specially designed frog-o-matic tights and traversing the various landscapes in a bid to rescue your lady love and batter the wicked witch Margaret (Margaret?) into a gooey, gelatinous pulp.

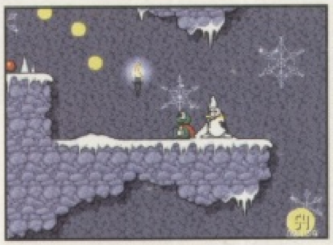
But the course of true love, naturally enough, doesn't run smoothly and ol' bulgy eyes must conquer all manner of hardships en route to the snog which may or may not restore his Princely form (we wouldn't want to give the ending away, now would we?).

Starting off in the Magic Woods you're confronted with the staggeringly unoriginal task of fending off baddies like bees, hedgehogs and snails; climbing hills and trees; uncovering absurdly obvious secret tunnels and, of course, topping up your super powers with speed-up, slow-down, extra points and bottles of Lucozade that build up your energy.

Other collectible bonuses include frog wings for bigger jumps, invisibility where you're confronted with the hilarious sight (add heavy irony as required) of frog-face disappearing, leaving just his eyes on show and baby frogs in bubbles which you can use to shoot the occasional hovering bird or bee. Your backside too, is a handy weapon, and it can be used in a useful bottom-bouncing fashion on most foes.

The aim in the first few levels is to collect the required number of coins within the time limit which gets more stringent as the game progresses. From the Magic Woods you progress onto five further worlds including Ice Land, Pyramids and Haunted Castle, all of which contain around four levels each.

After every level you can gamble your the points collected in the bonus room where you're confronted with a huge, prize-giving fruit machine. Match the required symbols up in the right order and you win extra points which you can go on to gamble for extra lives and even handy level codes — admittedly, this bit is quite a nice touch, but after the first few attempts, all interest wanes fairly rapidly.



Superfrog bounds through a winter wonderland — watch out for flying snowballs!

Hokey kokey, there's the basics, now what's it really like? Well, as you may have gathered from my earlier comments, I'm hardly enamoured by this game to say the least. But why, you may ask? Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin:

The graphics are appalling on the PC — resembling the Sega Master System on a bad day with uninspired sprites, horrendously simplistic backgrounds and inadequate, very ordinary animation. The story-line sucks big lemons and the humour — a so-called big selling point — isn't funny at all. The hero is pixelly and far too small while the sprite-detection is nothing short of chronic. Finally, the gameplay, although quite fast-paced, is dated, repetitive and ultimately very, very boring. You can't accuse the game of being too easy but such is the nature of the password system that you'll find yourself replaying the first few levels over and over again which gets *extremely* frustrating all too soon.

All in all, Superfrog is froggy by name but a bit of dog by nature. It might have caused a splash when it emerged on the Amiga, but as a platform contender on the PC it's a joke — play it as much as you like but it isn't gonna transform into a Prince. Ever.

SUPERFROG

TEAM 17/IN-HOUSE

(0924) 385903

£19.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM and 3.5Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Gravis Ultrasound and Sound Blaster soundcards.

THE GOOD...

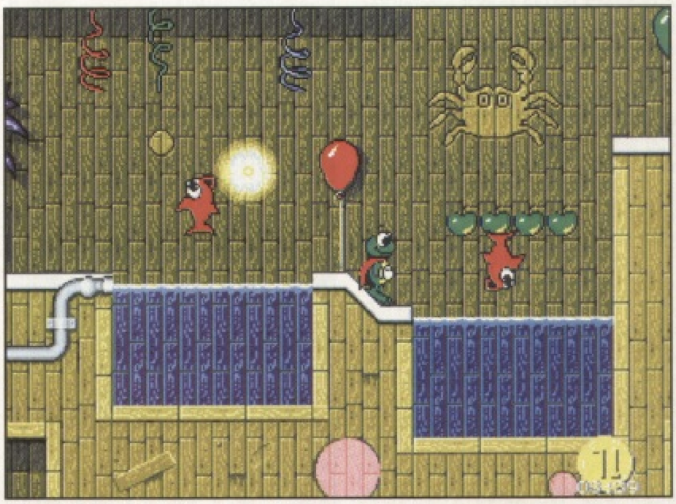
- It's fairly fast-paced action.
- It's certainly not too easy
- Er...um... The frog's cloak is a lovely shade of red.

...AND THE BAD

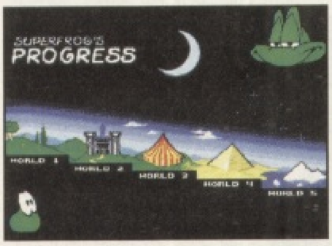
- Dull, unoriginal and dated gameplay means that boredom rears its ugly head after only a few levels.
- The graphics are, quite frankly, crap and should never have been seen on the PC.
- Ultra-naff storyline and unfunny funny bits.

Overall

60%



Keep Superfrog away from water because this is one green amphibian who can't swim. Watch out for the killer fish too — they aren't red herrings!



Superfrog's journey begins in lush green pastures and ends in icy wastelands. Brrr...

FLIGHT OF THE
AMAZON
Queen
Crash Land Into Adventure!
With it I can turn humans into dinosaur people!
Are you the same Trader Bob that this parrot told me about?
I'm not too happy either lady. Are you ever in a good mood?
Mullins 94

FULL CD-ROM TALKIE

An animated graphic adventure featuring PROGRESSIVELY DIFFICULT LEVEL OF PLAY • 100 DIFFERENT GRAPHIC LOCATIONS
OVER 40 CHARACTERS WITH WHICH TO INTERACT • ATMOSPHERIC MUSIC AND SOUND EFFECTS

A GAME BY **JOHN PASSFIELD** AND **STEVE STAMATIADIS**

INTERACTIVE BINARY ILLUSIONS

PC GAMES STAR

Descent

Alex Simmons goes underground to find Interplay's refreshing alternative to Doom.

In five years of reviewing software, I have *never* known a game to spawn so many clones. The game in-question is, *of course*, Doom (I groan every time the damn thing is mentioned now), and it's got to the ludicrous stage where you can't walk into a software store without being bombarded by thousands of inferior copies in some shape or form. And the saddest thing is, most of them aren't even worth the disks they come on.

Descent is different though. Although similar in style to ID's game (i.e. it's a 3D shoot-'em-up), Interplay's offering breathes new life into an almost-stale genre by replacing the customary gun-totting soldier with an agile skimmer capable of flying through Descent's twisting texture-mapped tunnels at great speed. It's not as conventional as walking along the ground, knee-deep in gore, because in Descent there's nothing to stop you from flying upside down or on your side — in fact, it sometimes helps!

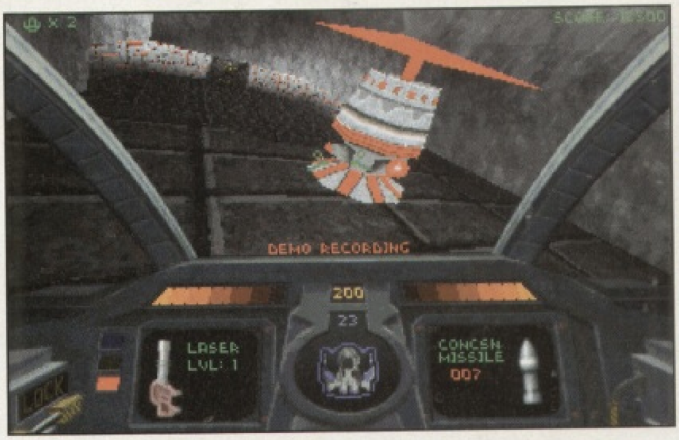
The game is set in vast underground mining complexes plagued by rebelling robots. The droids patrolling each complex's labyrinth-like passageways appear in various shapes and sizes, packing anything from weedy laser cannons to high-powered plasma blasters. Depending on the difficulty setting (there are five to choose from, ranging from rookie to ridiculous), the robots either linger in the open before occasionally firing or, in rock-hard 'insane' mode, jink to avoid your shots and unleash streams of laser bolts before dashing for cover.

The skimmer is controlled using a combination of joystick and keyboard. It can move in any direction, hover on the spot and also slide from side to side which makes strafing and dodging incoming fire much easier. It's equipped with primary and secondary weapon pods, lasers dumped in the first and missiles squeezed into the latter.

Continuous laser fire is restricted by the skimmer's limited energy source, which depletes each time the cannon is fired. Additional power cells can often be found in the wrecks of enemy craft, while the glowing energy centres provide on-the-fly refuelling simply by gliding through the tunnel.

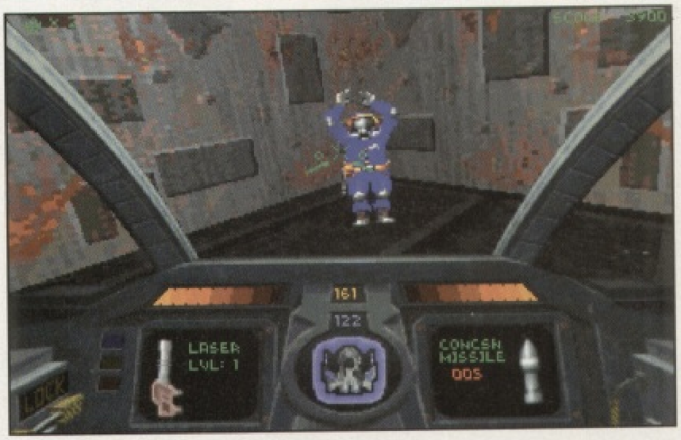
The skimmer's protective shields provide protection against enemy shots, and again brightly-coloured pods can be found to replenish any damage sustained. Should your ship's shield level dissipate completely, you lose one of your three lives and you have to restart the level from the beginning. While, mercifully, any enemies previously destroyed don't regenerate, any power-ups previously collected are automatically lost, although they can be reclaimed by speedily returning to place of your earlier demise where they can be found bobbing gently in the air.

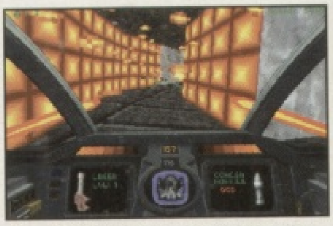
Shield and energy top-ups are by far the most common bonus, although the familiar weapon power-ups and smart



(Above) Make sure you've planned your escape route before you destroy the generator.

(Below) To rescue the stranded hostages, just fly past and pick 'em up.





(Above) This glowing corridor is a refueling room, useful for topping up your weapon's energy source on-the-fly.

(Below) Descent features 30 levels, which can be played in both solo and multi-player mode via either a serial link or network.

It's a bit like...

...Oh, you know what it like. It's that bloody Doom game again. But for once, Descent's novel and exciting approach raises it high above the sea of feeble Doom-clones already swamping the PC. Mind you, there's denying that ID's game is still brilliant — if you haven't already got it, why not?

Going Underground

Descent's meanies go from bad to worse — the Drones attack in swarms but are individually puny, while the thick-skinned hulks and Spider droids are armed to the teeth.

Class 1 Drone

Weak 'n' puny, these are small fry.

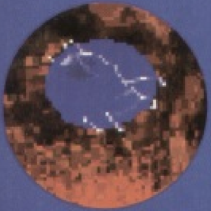
Class 2 Drone

Tougher, with rapid-firing blue lasers.

Medium Lifter

Watch out for the deadly spikes on this one!

Bonus Basement



Energy Top-Up

Grab the glowing stars to add life to your lasers!

Concussion Missiles

Inaccurate but extremely awesome — nuke 'em!

Vulcan Cannon

This gatling gun eats ammo like there's no tomorrow.

Homing Missile

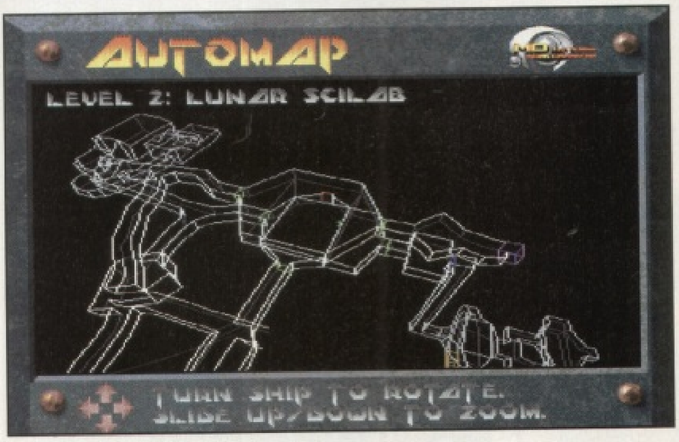
Fire-and-forget missiles make life so much easier.

Proximity Bomb

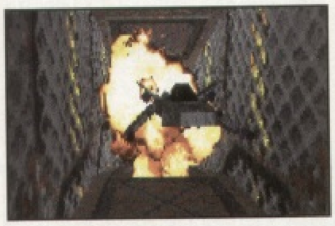
Drop one of these babies and run like hell!

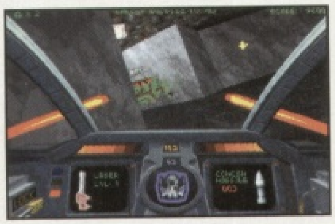
Spreadfire Cannon

Energy-sapping, but the three-shot burst is great!



(Above) Descent's 3D automap may look complex but it is in fact vital for negotiating the winding, 'bot-infested tunnels.
(Below) Having destroyed the generator, quickly make good your escape.
(Bottom) Like Doom, the strafe key proves invaluable for taking out enemies hiding behind corners — nip out, blast, nip back in!





bombs can be found providing you look hard enough. You see, most of the heavy artillery is hidden away in the countless secret rooms, which are often discovered by luck or by searching the walls for faint marks and inconsistencies in their texture.

The introductory low-powered laser can be beefed up to the sexier Quad laser that, obviously, fires four blasts instead of two. The rapid-firing Vulcan cannon is hungry on ammo but is perfect for engaging swarms of enemies, as is the Spreadfire cannon which fires a burst of three shots each time it's fired. But these are all small fry compared to the Plasma Gun and its even bigger brother, the Fusion Cannon, which hurls an enormous ball of energy capable of wiping out a room full of robots in a single shot! Drawing power directly from the skimmer's reactor, this monster saps energy like there's no tomorrow, so a few successive shots is about as much as you'll get from this baby.

There are also one-shot weapons, like the unguided Concussion Rockets and more effective Homing Missiles. Proximity Bombs are dropped and explode when approached, so are excellent for stopping a pursuing enemy ship, while the Smart Missile fires a bomb which splits and sends explosive shrapnel in all directions — launch one of these babies in a enclosed chamber and the result is devastating! The Mega Missile is the most destructive weapon in the game — do the words 'nuclear' and 'warhead' ring any bells?

While lasers are best-suited for eliminating enemy 'bots, the missiles are best left for the main reactor, which must be destroyed to successfully complete each mission. The reactor, a cylindrical tower protected by gun turrets, can withstand severe punishment before exploding violently. Once it's destroyed, you then have just a few seconds to escape — fail to find the exit and it's game over. The 3D automap will provide the perfect escape route, but all the while you're glancing at the screen, the reactor's nearing melt-down.

In all, Descent is jam-packed with 30 massive levels which can be played in both solo and multi-player modes, via a serial or network link. As with all multi-player games the addition of human competition is well-received — gloating to your best mate rather than a computer opponent is much more fulfilling!

As you'd expect, the complex mazes of textured-tunnels are fairly processor-hungry, and although Descent will run on a 33MHz 386, I recommend at least a 486SX to get things running smoothly. The display size can be decreased to speed the game up, but who wants to play on a screen the size of a postcard? On the same note, Descent will run full-screen perfectly well on a Pentium — but then it bloody well should on a machine costing over £1500! Even so, whatever machine you're playing Descent on, the feeling of disorientation as you corkscrew through a labyrinth of shafts leading in every direction is awesome — far better than climbing stairs and falling down pits in Doom.

In fact, Descent has all the features that made Doom so brilliant and, while slick 3D graphics, frantic gameplay and the all-important multi-player mode have all been seen before, the fact you can move up and down (rather than just left and right) adds a totally new dimension to the game in every sense.

Although not *quite* as frenzied (and certainly not as gory) as Doom, Descent is a refreshing alternative to the myriad of uninspiring 3D blasters currently plaguing the PC. Technically impressive and invigoratingly original, *at last* there's an worthwhile alternative to ID's blood-bath.

DESCENT

INTERPLAY/PARALLAX
(01235) 821666
£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and 15Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; Joystick; Sound Blaster, Gravis Ultrasound, Pro Audio Spectrum and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Adds much-needed life to the all-too-stale Doom genre.
- Topped off with an excellent multi-player option.
- Tremendously enjoyable and supremely challenging.
- Three-dimensional in every sense.

...AND THE BAD

- Isn't quite as frantic or as gory as Doom.

Overall

90%

Small Hulk

The hulks are heavily armoured but slow.

Medium Hulk

BIG guns, THICK armour — run away!

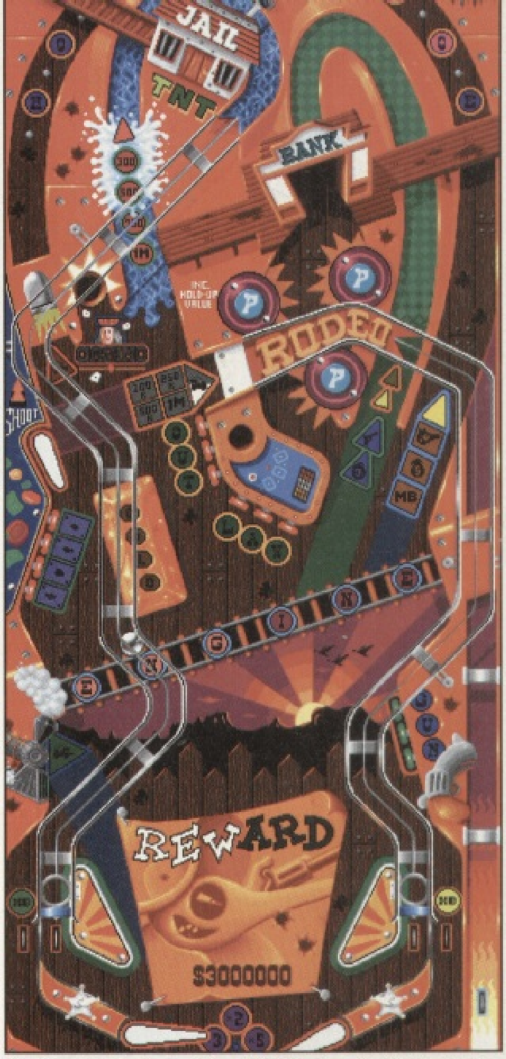
Spider Droid

Well 'ard — use your concussion missiles.

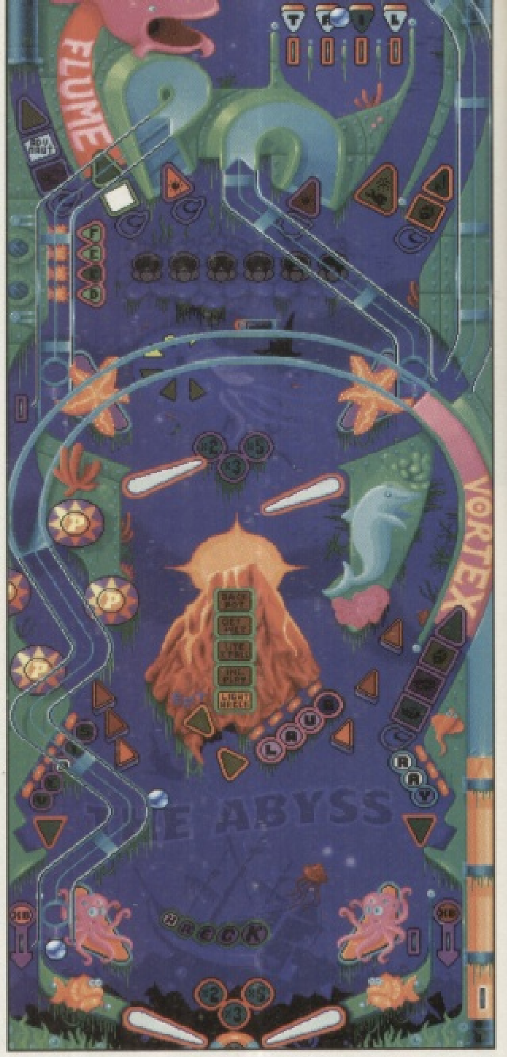
PC GAMES STAR

Psycho Pinball CD

Pinball Wizard Alex Simmons takes to the table in the flippin' great Psycho Pinball.



Shoot the ball into the bank to get the jackpot on the Wild West table and use the top-left flipper to get the Rodeo skill shot.



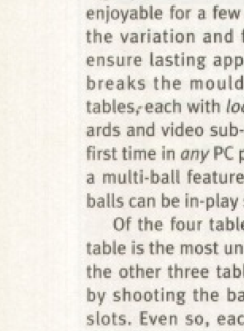
The jackpot is unlocked by dropping the ball into the volcano, but to play the dot-matrix sub-games, shoot the pipes at the top.

Pinball afficionados will always maintain that no computer game can ever be as good as the real thing. Accurately simulating the glow of the lights, the rattle of the flippers, the blare of the music — it just can't be done. Well maybe they're right, but Psycho Pinball is about as close as you're gonna get — and you don't have to pump in pound coins each time you fancy a game.

Although the PC is already blessed with a few pinball games, I personally didn't find any of them *that* entertaining. Epic Pinball and Pinball Dreams are enjoyable for a few hours but both lack the variation and features needed to ensure lasting appeal. Psycho Pinball breaks the mould by featuring four tables, each with *loads* of bonuses, hazards and video sub-games. Also, for the first time in *any* PC pinball game, there's a multi-ball feature, where up to three balls can be in-play simultaneously.

Of the four tables, the main Psycho table is the most unique as, during play, the other three tables can be accessed by shooting the ball into the relevant slots. Even so, each table is separate game in its own right as they're all individually themed and include different bonus games and features.

The Abyss is a wet-'n'-wild undersea table and has two pairs of flippers, one at the bottom and the other half-way up. A central volcano awards prizes including the jackpot, and various sub-games are accessed through two pipes at the top of the table — Fast Fishing and Blubber Belly are both played on the dot-matrix scoreboard and can be extremely rewarding if played skilfully.



Dropping the ball in one of two side vents initiates multi-ball with a difference — the first ball is spat from one vent to the other while another is thrown into play, so there's two balls bouncing around at the same time.

However, it is on the Trick Or Treat table that the unique multi-ball appears. Successfully shoot three balls into the ball-lock and all hell breaks loose as you smack the flippers furiously trying to keep all the balls in-play *and* score some big-league points. Trick Or Treat's score panel sequences include a shooting gallery-style game and Escape From the Crypt, a sort of 'Simon Says' where you must match the computer's number sequence to break free from the LED coffins and snatch the prize.

The Wild West is one of the fastest tables in the game, and again includes the excellent multi-ball as well as three bonus games. Black Jack is a simple game of 21; Hi-Lo is, erm, guess if the next card is, um, higher or lower to win; and to win points in Dodge The Express you have to, er, dodge the Express.

All the tables have the usual ramps and hazards, plus loads of bumpers, targets and traps. Up to four players can compete in any one game, and there's also a two-player simultaneous option in which competitors take control of one flipper each, the points being added to the score of the player whose flipper last hit the ball.

In terms of presentation, Psycho Pinball is every bit as good as you'd expect from a pinball game. The tables are bright and vibrant, the scrolling is smooth and the sound effects are spot on — there's even loads of rendered animations between tables. However, it's the game's tremendous playability that makes it simply the best 'pinny' game on the PC.

PSYCHO PINBALL

CODEMASTERS/ANDREW GRAHAM

(01926) 814132

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- Packed full of ramps, targets, bonus games and little shiny, silver balls.
- Immensely addictive.
- The presentation is top-notch.

...AND THE BAD

- Hmm... Nope, I can't think of any.

Overall

90%

David Upchurch is a big, hairy, hard-drinkin' brute, so it was only fitting that he got to review US Gold's Viking sim.

Hammer Of The Gods CD

When Hammer Of The Gods fell out of the originality tree, it failed to hit any branches on the way down. Load it up and the first thing you think is "My God! I must've fallen into a strange galactic worm-hole which has transported me back to 1991! Help!"

Yes, it's true: Hammer Of The Gods does bear a striking resemblance to a certain seminal strategy game that appeared in that very year. The words "Civilization" and "clone" spring to mind. Primitive map? You got it. Little square pieces to move around the map? You got them, too. But wait, it's got Vikings in it. Oh, that's all right then.

Actually, although the game *looks* a lot like Sid Meier's almighty homage to the ascent of man, it isn't entirely derivative. Sure, you're put in charge of a race of people and your goals include exploring the world, duffing up your rivals and founding colonies. Pretty standard fare. But, as it happens, that isn't your main aim. Your main aim is to become the all-powerful Hammer Of The Gods — and this takes some doing.

The idea is to brown-nose your way to supremacy by performing a series of tasks set by various Norse gods. Like life itself, you start at the bottom and work your way up. That means completing quests for the tiny little godlings nobody's even heard of before eventually working your way up through the middle management (Loki, Heimdall and so on) to the boss man himself: Odin.

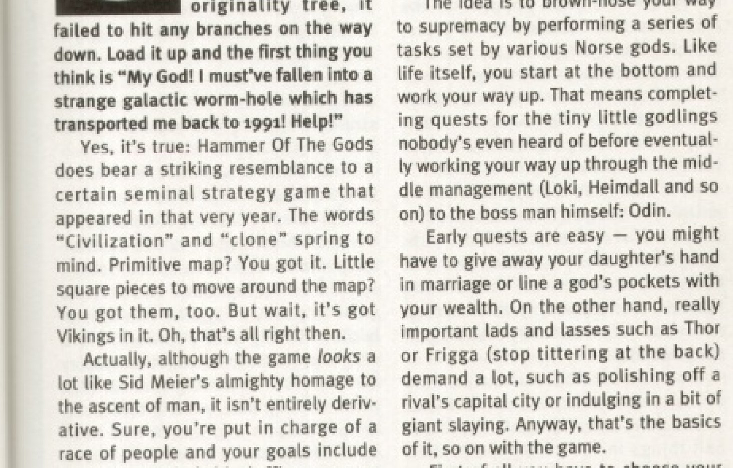
Early quests are easy — you might have to give away your daughter's hand in marriage or line a god's pockets with your wealth. On the other hand, really important lads and lasses such as Thor or Frigga (stop tittering at the back) demand a lot, such as polishing off a rival's capital city or indulging in a bit of giant slaying. Anyway, that's the basics of it, so on with the game.

First of all you have to choose your race. You could be unoriginal and plump for the humans, but you also have the option to lead the elves, the dwarves or the trolls. The race you eventually settle for affects the game quite a bit, because each race has its own separate set of quests. Elves, being ecologically friendly, airy-fairy types, tend to get quests that involve founding colonies and increasing population size. Trolls get to beat up the other races a lot. Dwarves, who for some reason, seem to like gold, need to build up their wealth, and humans do a bit of everything.

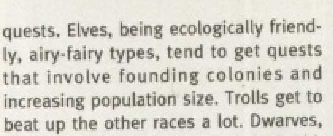
That's the interesting bit. The rest of the game *is* just like Civilization: explore the world, kill the other races and form alliances. 'Nuff said. The only real difference is combat, which takes place in a seen-from-the-side type of view and involves a lot of turn-based moving around and shooting.

None of this is bad — you could do a lot worse than try and emulate what is arguably the greatest game ever. Unfortunately, there's just one problem. The artificial intelligence is so elaborate that, unless you own a Pentium or DX4, you'll have to wait absolutely ages in between turns. I'm not talking 30 seconds here, either; I'm talking five minutes plus on a 33MHz 486DX.

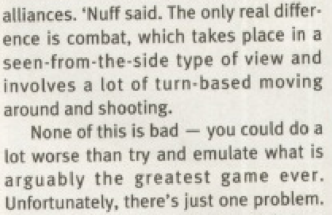
And the longer the game goes on, the more you have to wait. At the start of the game you won't be twiddling your thumbs for more than a few seconds, but by the time you reach Odin's quest (if you've the patience, that is) you'll be sat there like a lemon for about ten minutes. Other games of this type (Civ, Colonization, Master Of Magic, etc) don't have this problem, so why should Hammer Of The Gods? Although this is an entertaining game, avoid it if you have anything slower than a DX2. Otherwise, be my guest.



Unlike Civilization, when you attack a town or monster you get bunged into this lovely combat screen. This quest, which involves killing the large dragon-like beastie here, is a bit of a toughie: one false move and you're toast.



Hey, never mind the crappy graphics, just feel the quality of the gameplay...



Troops can be recruited from your home town — though there are a finite number of men available, so don't waste 'em.

HAMMER OF THE GODS CD

US GOLD/NEW WORLD COMPUTING

(0121) 606 1800

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

50MHz 486, VGA, 4Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Good fun.
- A nice variation on the Civilization style game.

...AND THE BAD

- Don't even think about it unless you own at least a DX2.
- Not overly original.
- Yup, it's those dull, antiquated map graphics again.

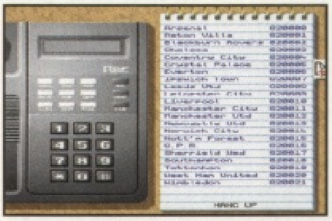
Overall

75%

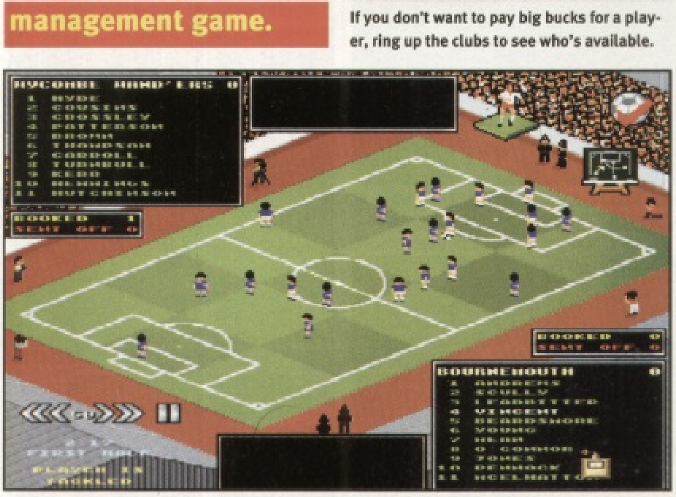
PC GAMES STAR

Premier Manager 3

Dean Evans avoids John Motson and shouts from the touchline in Gremlin's newest in-depth footy management game.



If you don't want to pay big bucks for a player, ring up the clubs to see who's available.



The isometric-3D pitch isn't the prettiest thing you'll ever come across, but if you slow down the game speed, you can discover whether your carefully planned tactics are actually working.

Football management games have always been popular on the PC — the fact that Gremlin's latest Premier Manager game now has a '3' after it should be proof enough of that. Much of this success is probably down to the fact that some people think that they could manage a football league team better than the professionals. "I wouldn't have sold Andy Cole for £7 million — Keegan's lost his head!", shout the sceptics in the local pub. "Why doesn't Terry Venables give that Chris Sutton a chance?" implore the tabloids. It's very easy to throw stones when you're not actually standing in the glasshouse.

So if you've ever shouted "My Granny could do better than that!", or you've tried one of those fantasy football things in the newspapers, then Premier Manager 3 is a real chance to put your so-called management skills to the test. What do you do when you're down 3-2 and there's 15 minutes left to play? Do you cross your fingers and hope your team score? Do you change the formation and chuck everybody into a last-gasp attack? Or perhaps you should bring on a fresh pair of legs to see if you can nab an equaliser in the dying seconds?

In PM3 you have to face this sort of problem a lot. The game puts you in control of a lowly Vauxhall Conference club and it's then up to you to take command, chuck out the dead wood and soar up through the divisions to the dizzy heights of Premiership glory. If you've played Premier Manager 2, then you'll be instantly familiar with the basic game mechanics, but although PM3 looks pretty much the same as its predecessor, there are some notable improvements and tweaks that make it arguably the best football management game on the PC.

Like most other football management sims, PM3 is a typical 'juggle-the-stats' game, because in addition to training your players and picking team formations, you've also got to improve your stadium, sell advertising space on your sponsorship boards, set ticket prices and shrewdly balance the club's budget. Although it's important that your team is successful, PM3 is also a business simulation, so there's no point buying eight new talented players if you haven't got pockets deep enough to keep the club in hot dog sausages afterwards. As always, there's a fine balance to be struck, and it's precisely this strategic element that makes Premier Manager 3 so addictive.

And it's this addictiveness that's hard to explain. PM3 doesn't boast Full-Motion Video or Gouraud-shaded graphics, and simulating the day-to-day running of a football club doesn't really sound too exciting. But if you play the game properly — and by this I mean *without* saving your position before each important cup tie so you can replay it if you lose — winning your division while coping with miserly directors, injured players and the FA who keep demanding that you spend £100,000 on ground safety, is a very tall order indeed. It's the sort of challenge that can keep you playing late into the night, the "I'll just have one more game and *then* I'll go to bed.." scenario.

At first glance, Premier Manager 3 looks fairly complicated, but it's very easy to pick up and the icon-based interface makes running your club very simple. There are so many features in the game that, apart from messing around with this month's cover-mounted demo, probably the best way to explain how PM3 works is to quickly set up a team and play a few matches.

Let's say you want to manage Macclesfield Town, for example. Before you even strap on your Predators for your first professional match, you've got to hire the backroom staff (the head coach, a physiotherapist, a scout, etc) who will help ensure the smooth running of your club.

The physio's role is self-explanatory, as is that of the head coach. The scout (you can hire up to four) can be used to spy on your opponents tactics, to search for players of a certain rating or to provide a full report on a club and its players. Additionally, you can also hire specific coaches to train players in the four main skills — handling, tackling, pass-

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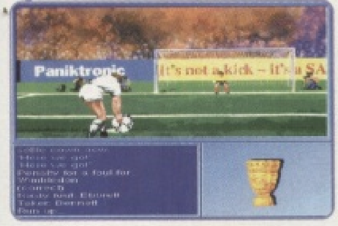
It's a bit like...

...On The Ball. No matter whether you pick the League or the World Cup edition, Ascon's OTB is probably the only other football management game that's worth taking a look at. It's got all the features you'd expect to find — transfer lists, ground improvements, training, etc — but it uses some rather attractive watercolour-style graphics to depict the all-important Saturday afternoon match action.



ing and shooting — and you can hire a youth team coach to encourage home-grown talent. Lastly you can hire an assistant manager, which allows you to delegate some of the more mundane day-to-day tasks; organising training schedules, checking the sponsorship boards, dealing with injured players, that sort of thing.

Once you've hired your staff, green-lighted any ground improvements and checked the sponsorship boards, you can take an in-depth look at your team. Each player in PM3 has a number of percentage ratings which tell you how good they are in the four basic skills and how good their heading, ball control and fitness is. For example, if you've got a goalkeeper with a handling skill of 42, he's going to save more shots than a bloke with a rating of 35. Likewise a striker with a shooting skill of 52 will probably stab in more goals than a forward who can only muster a 37. It's a system that's very easy to get the hang of, and as you progress through the game, you can chop and change your squad around to improve your team's overall effectiveness.

You can add to your squad in three ways. Firstly you can dabble in the transfer market, paying big money for players who have been put up for sale by their clubs. Secondly, you can ring up the clubs individually to try and poach players from them — this method is especially effective at the beginning of the season, when you can nab players who are out of contract and get a talented player for a bargain-basement price. Lastly, you can loan players from better teams, which allows you to improve your side temporarily if you can't scrape together the cash to buy a new plant pot, let alone a £90,000 midfielder.

When you've assembled your dream team, you can then pick a formation and customise your playing style. One of the new features in PM3 is the way that you can alter the individual team tactics. Within an individual formation, let's say 4-4-2, you can specify whether a player runs more than he passes, set the distance he shoots from and fix where and how high he directs his passes.

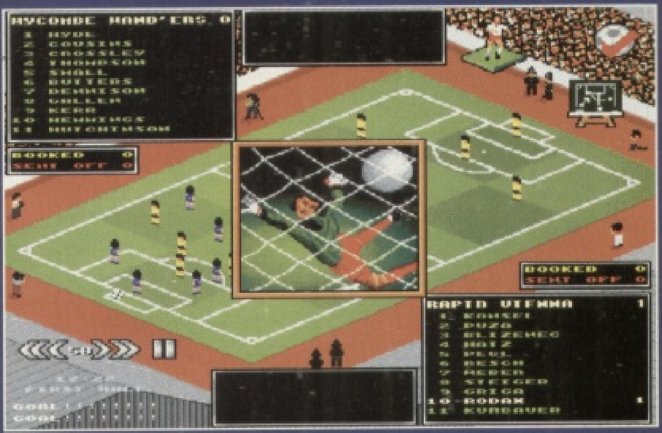
For example, you could instruct your wingers to knock high balls into the middle of the pitch, while a striker can be told to run 80% of the time when he has the ball and only to shoot from short range. If this wasn't flexible enough, you can also adjust the positions of the players in any of the formations, choose which of your players will be captain and who in your team will take the free kicks.

After all this, when you've bought and sold players, tweaked your formations, set your ticket prices and upgraded your ground, it's time to see whether all your meticulous planning actually does any good out on the pitch. Football management games are notorious for their unimaginative game graphics, and while PM3 isn't exactly stunning, the isometric-3D view of the pitch allows you to see exactly what's going on and whether or not your carefully planned tactics are the work of an inspired football genius or of an amateur who has no idea what's going on.

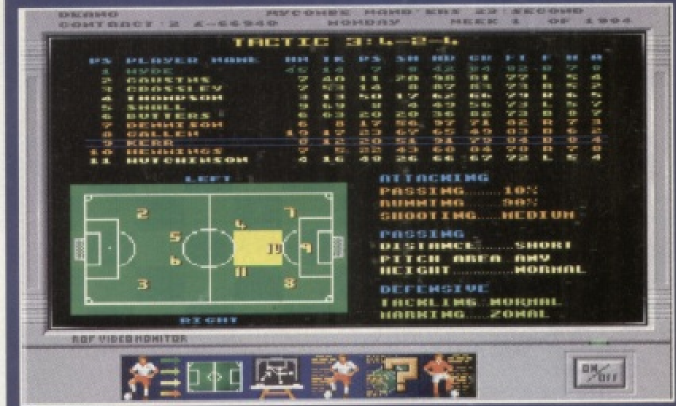
Although the graphics are a far cry from those in On The Ball, they're much more functional as you can actually see your tactics in action. In fact, together with the tiny illustrations and the digitised sound samples (from a football commentator, no less), they actually work much better. Besides, the graphics in Premier Manager 2 stretched to a little ball that moved left and right along a small, brown line, so really anything that looks vaguely football-like is a massive improvement.

I'm afraid that I'm a sucker for the Premier Manager games, so it's no surprise that I think Premier Manager 3 is a superb game that will keep you occupied for months. You can play it in any number of ways, taking the Blackburn route (i.e. buying success) or the Crewe Alexandra route (i.e. developing your youth squad then selling them off for a huge fat profit). Likewise you can play PM3 on a variety of levels. You can spend hours tweaking individual ratings and player positions after every match, or you can just find a formation that seems to work and stick with it through thick and thin.

PM3 never overwhelms you, and while it's not what you'd call easy, it's not altogether impossible to win the Conference first time and move up into the Endsleigh League. All in all, it's a comprehensive and absorbing game. The gameplay will probably become a touch repetitive by the time you reach the Premier League, but by then you'll be able to cram your team with million pound players and compete for Euro honours with the likes of Blackburn, Newcastle and Manchester United. Ooh-ahh Premier Manag-er! Come on and play it if you think you're hard enough...



Playing friendlies at the start of a season can give you an indication of your team's form...

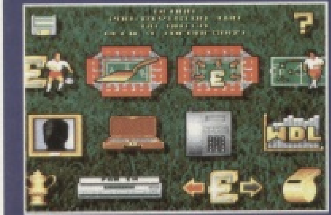


ATTACKING
PASSING.......10%
RUNNING.......90%
SHOOTING.....MEDIUM
PASSING
DISTANCE.......SHORT
PITCH AREA ANY
HEIGHT...........NORMAL
DEFENSIVE
TACKLING..NORMAL
MARKING....ZONAL

You can adjust the positions of your players, where they pass, how hard they tackle, etc.

CLUB INFORMATION ON WOLVERHAMPTON
LEAVE CLUB INFORMATION

Nabbing players who are out of contract is a very cheap way of bringing some decent talent to your club.



Everything in PM3 is controlled using a very clear and simple icon interface.

TEAM SELECTION

Wycombe Wanderers in all their glory. Championship contenders or what?

PREMIER MANAGER 3

GREMLIN/REALMS OF FANTASY

(01742) 753423

£34.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 5Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Roland and Sound Canvas soundcards.

THE GOOD...

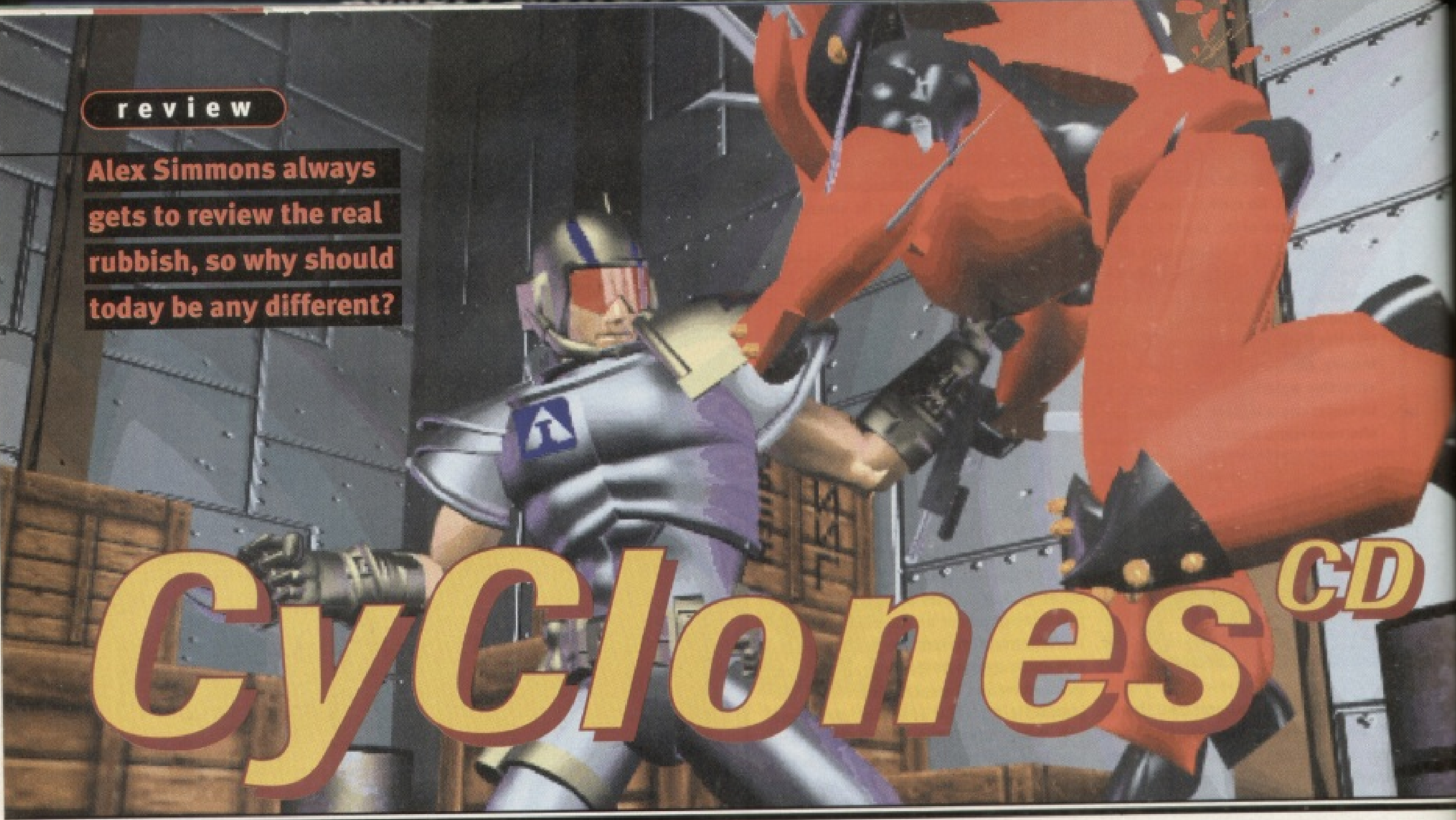
- Superbly comprehensive football management game.
- Okay, the match graphics aren't worth making a song and dance about, but they're not all bad.
- Lots and lots of features.

...AND THE BAD

- The music really gets on your nerves (although you can switch it off).
- You can't view the other league tables. Why Gremlin? Why?

Overall

91%



Alex Simmons always gets to review the real rubbish, so why should today be any different?

CyClones CD

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. What I mean by this is that if software companies are going to produce a Doom-style game, why not stick with the original, friendly and familiar Doom controls? SSI's 'homage' to ID's classic could have been a fairly good game were it not for a particularly horrible set of controls which make it almost unplayable.

And that's the game's main problem. The term 'user-friendly' is not one that could be honestly applied to CyClones. You see, not only do you have to use the keyboard (the numeric keypad is the default control for the moving around stuff) but you also need to use the mouse (for firing weapons and opening doors) as well. Talk about awkward.

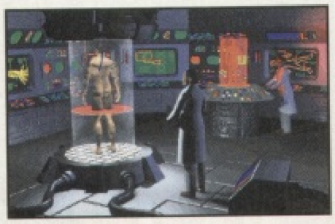
Let's start with a look at some of the nice comments printed on the back of the box: "A streamlined interface allows for quick access to weapons and inventory." Crap. The interface is cumbersome and extremely difficult to get to grips with. Next. "An on-line tutorial prepares you for combat." Nice idea, guys, but perhaps we wouldn't need a tutorial if the controls were any good.

Okay then, how about: "Multiple missions with variable difficulty settings give players of all experience levels a fair shot at CyClones." Utter drivel. After dying for the fifteenth time on the first level (gameplay set to easy) I was ready to throw in the towel — all due to that diabolical interface. And finally, the coup-de-grace: "A multimedia experience that'll blow you away!" Good grief! Do I detect a slight hint of exaggeration here? CyClones is no more than a sub-standard Doom-clone with some pretty cut-scenes. Get the picture?

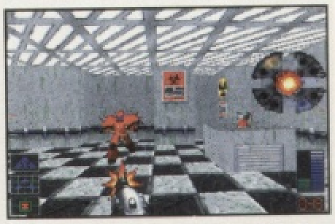
Right, that's my whinge out of the way. A pretty big whinge, given the nature of the problem, but there you have it. So does CyClones have any redeeming features at all? Well, the graphics aren't too bad. Not as good as Doom or System Shock, but a damn sight better than GameTek's Corridor 7 or Merit's Dr Radiaki. Thank heavens for small mercies. The sound effects could have been meatier, but the music's alright, in a ravey sort of way — it complements the action well enough. But then, of course, this *is* supposed to be "a white-hot multimedia explosion!" according to the back-of-the-box blurb.

The gameplay itself, control system aside, is run-of-the-mill 'shoot the monster'-type stuff. The storyline pits you, as defender of the Earth (yawn), against some cybernetic creatures created by evil aliens. So basically it's an excuse to shoot things and, er, that's it. Oh, and you have to fly a jump jet every now and then — but this is a lot less exciting than it sounds.

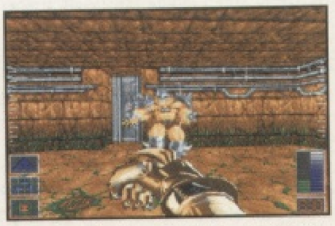
By now, you may be getting the impression that I didn't particularly like this game. I didn't set out to hate it, but the control system (I know, I know, I keep harping on about it) is just so dreadful that you need the patience of a saint to even think about persevering with it. If your name is, indeed, Saint Peter, then there are some reasonably varied missions to get your teeth into. But against competitors such as System Shock, Doom, Heretic and Rise Of The Triad, CyClones doesn't stand a chance. Best forget it, eh?



This is you, and you've got cellulite. Time for a spot of liposuction.



The guy in red's an officer — they're fast, intelligent and very, very deadly.



This ugly critter is a berserker — he's strong but he isn't too bright.

CYCLONES CD

MINDSCAPE/SSI

(01444) 246333

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 486, VGA, 4Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Gravis Ultrasound soundcards.

THE GOOD...

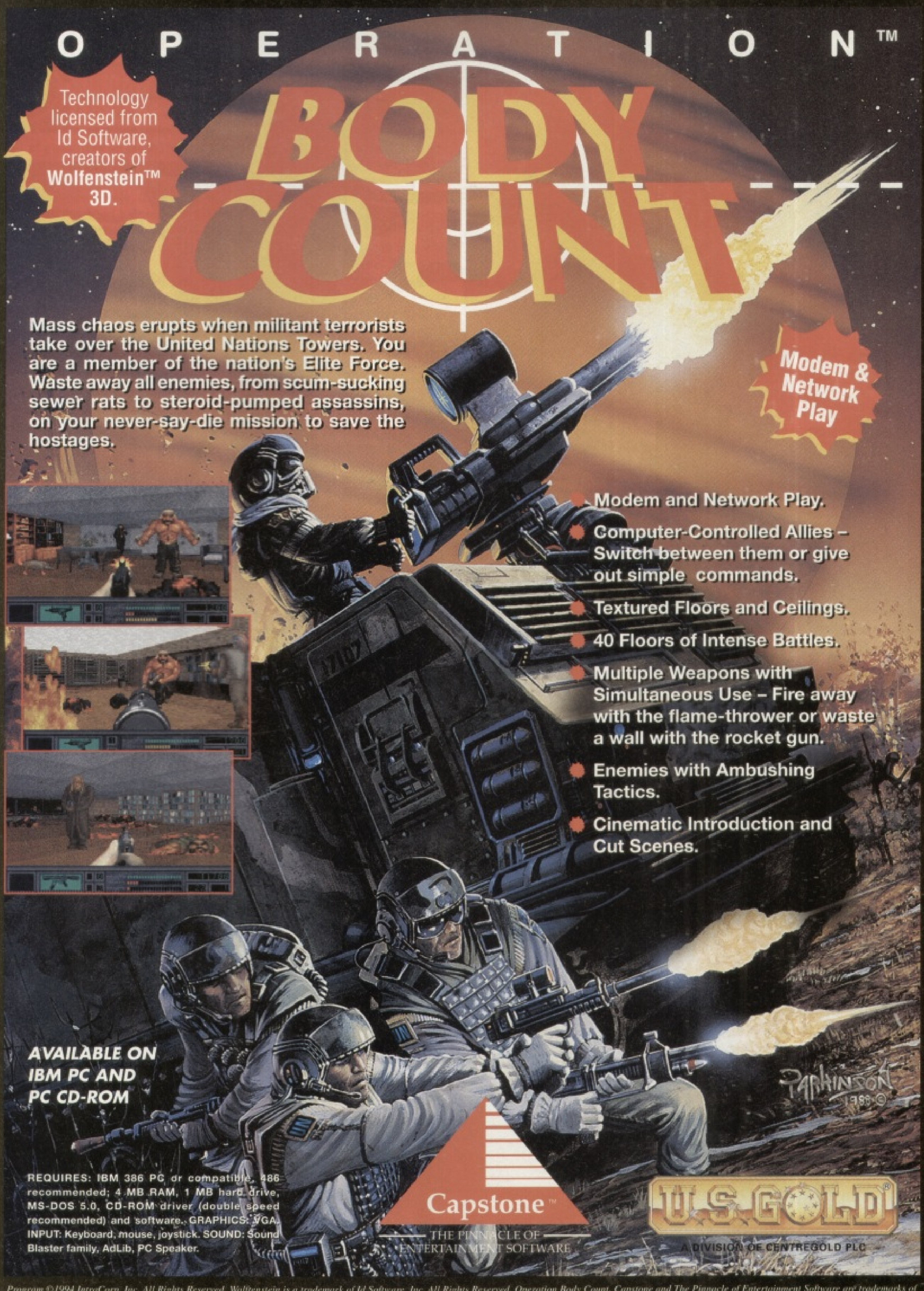
- The music's not bad.
- Some nice cut-scenes.

...AND THE BAD

- The control system is diabolical.
- Multimedia? Don't make me laugh.
- Five minutes of this and you'll wish it was Corridor 7.

Overall

40%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Modem & Network Play
Parkinson 1988 ©

OPERATION™ BODY COUNT

Mass chaos erupts when militant terrorists take over the United Nations Towers. You are a member of the nation's Elite Force. Waste away all enemies, from scum-sucking sewer rats to steroid-pumped assassins, on your never-say-die mission to save the hostages.

- Modem and Network Play.
- Computer-Controlled Allies – Switch between them or give out simple commands.
- Textured Floors and Ceilings.
- 40 Floors of Intense Battles.
- Multiple Weapons with Simultaneous Use – Fire away with the flame-thrower or waste a wall with the rocket gun.
- Enemies with Ambushing Tactics.
- Cinematic Introduction and Cut Scenes.

AVAILABLE ON IBM PC AND PC CD-ROM

REQUIRES: IBM 386 PC or compatible, 486 recommended; 4 MB RAM, 1 MB hard drive, MS-DOS 5.0, CD-ROM driver (double speed recommended) and software. GRAPHICS: VGA. INPUT: Keyboard, mouse, joystick. SOUND: Sound Blaster family, AdLib, PC Speaker.

Capstone™
THE PINNACLE OF ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE

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PC GAMES STAR

The Rebellion needs a hero to infiltrate the Empire. Alex Simmons jumped at the chance...

Dark Forces CD

Dark Forces is a brilliant game — a thoroughly pant-wetting cocktail of guns, (not so much) blood, sweat and more guns. This is the stuff *real* gamers crave and RPG-playing woosies fear. Quite simply, Dark Forces kicks ass, *big time!* And before you ask the all-important question, yes, it is better than *that* id game. In some respects, anyway.

But wasn't that always going to be the case? Combining the gameplay of Doom (arguably the PC's most popular game) with characters from the Star Wars universe is a fool-proof recipe for success, especially when the crack coders at LucasArts are at the helm. After all, who wouldn't like to slip inside Luke Skywalker's sweaty jock strap and take pot-shots at Darth Vader and his Stormtrooper army?

But before you go fumbling for your light sabre, wait a moment, because you don't actually get to wear Skywalker's boots and use the power of the Force. You see, you're not a Jedi, just some ex-Imperial officer named Kyle Kataran who made a break for the Alliance. The Rebels need a hero — and guess who's just volunteered...

As you probably already know, Dark Forces is a first-person shoot-'em-up in which Kyle must walk, run and shoot his way past countless waves of enemy troops. But unlike Doom, Dark Forces is more of a structured blast rather than a mindless gore-fest — much more is made of the puzzles. Bridges must be moved by flicking levers, doors are opened by shooting switches while negotiating moving platforms, and power generators are started by finding the ignition card and then inserting it in the control terminal. "Pah — that's kid's stuff!" I bet you're thinking, but at least it prevents the gung-ho gamer from walking straight through each level, auto-fire enabled, killing all in sight.

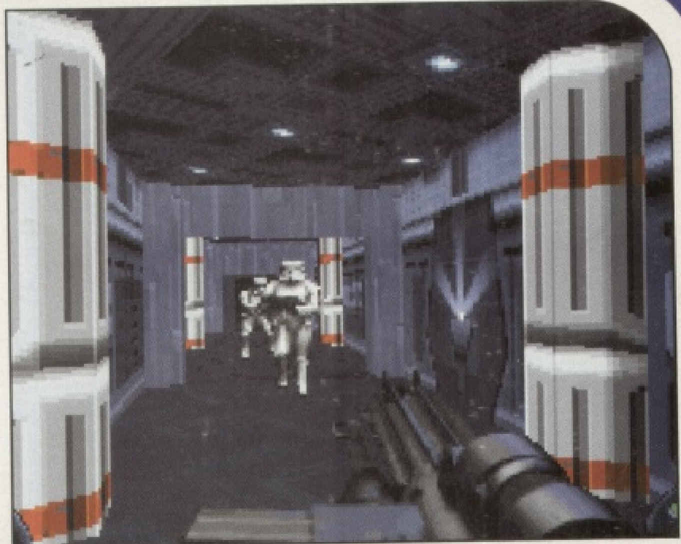
Kyle can move freely through the scenery, jumping across gaps and crouching to crawl under ledges and into tiny cubby-holes. This gives the game a much more three-dimensional feel, especially as you can also look up and down — an invaluable feature when engaging Stormtroopers firing from platforms far above or below.

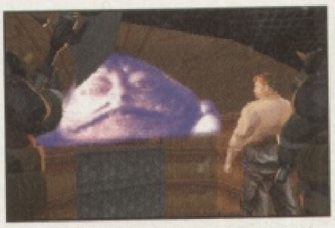
Because Dark Forces is from the fertile loins of LucasArts, it comes as no surprise that every effort has been made to drag the player into an engrossing and authentic Star Wars universe, one where you'll recognise locations, characters and other elements taken from the silver-screen trilogy. Even though Dark Forces *doesn't* adhere to the plot of any of the three movies in particular, there are occasions when the game relates to the films. For instance, the objective of the first mission is to retrieve the Death Star plans so the Rebellion can launch an all-out attack on the battle station, something which is seen at the end of Star Wars.

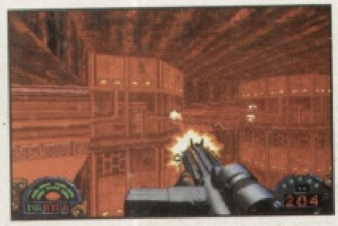
Another example appears later in the game, when you have to edge precariously along narrow ledges spanning seemingly-bottomless ventilation shafts to deactivate the power generators in a manner very similar to Obi-Wan Kenobi's nimble tip-toeing to the tractor beam generator during the first film. All the while you're balanced on the concrete tightrope, Stormtroopers unleash photon death from ledges far below, their brightly-coloured laser blasts ricocheting off the wall until they finally strike something soft and squidgy, be it you or themselves! It's this fantastic degree of attention to detail that makes Dark Forces an absolute dream to watch, let alone play.

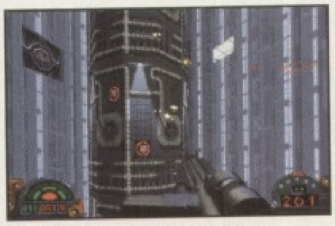
Dark Forces is a tough cookie right from the start. The levels are vast, sprawling beasts made up of cavernous halls and winding passages, which often take hours to fully explore. Because of this some may find Dark Forces less accessible and indeed not as exciting as Doom. This is true to some extent. There's a lot of wandering around, often through bloody corridors strewn with the bodies of previously-slaughtered Stormtroopers. Boring... That is until they regenerate. Yep, throughout each level regeneration points ensure an almost-constant stream of hapless cannon fodder strolls your way, so there really is no shortage of action in Dark Forces. Phew!

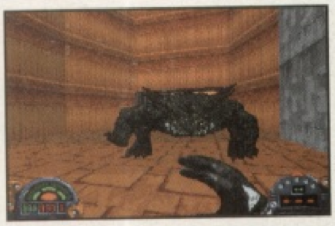
The variation and authenticity of the levels is impressive, as each of the fourteen scenarios is at least barely recognisable from one of the films. The Imperial installations are very clinical, with spotless computer-lined corridors connecting towering cylindrical generator chambers (the feeling of height is

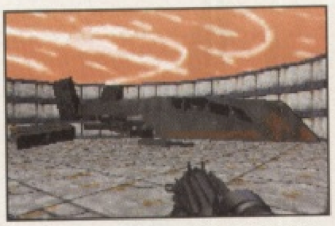

The Imperial bases are crawling with Stormtroopers, who just wander around, occasionally shooting at walls. It has to be said, they're not particularly intelligent.

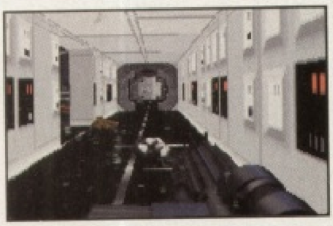

Jabba rears his ugly head. It seems Han Solo isn't the only one with a price on his head.

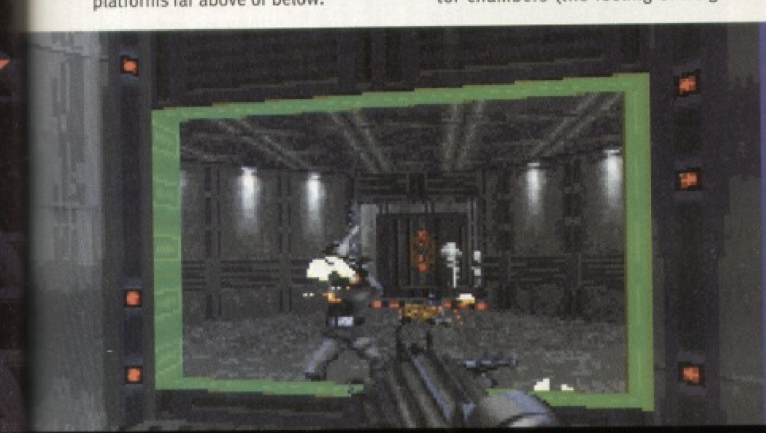

Blast away at the walls and the laser bolts will ricochet around the room!

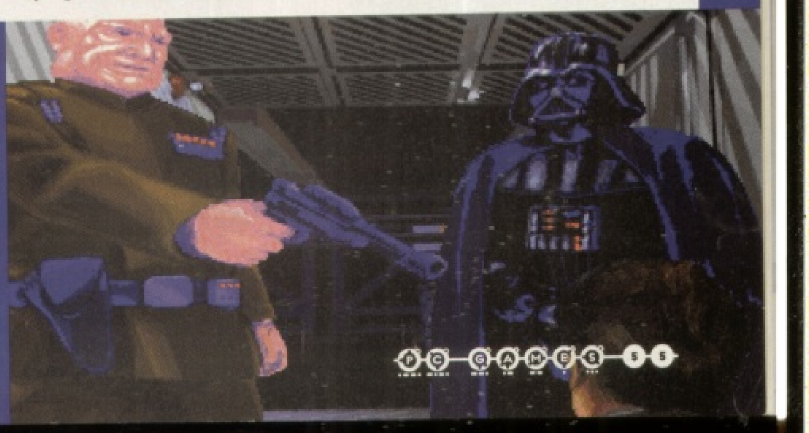

Follow in the foot-steps of Obi-Wan and deactivate the power generator.


Uh-oh, Jabba's guards have nicked your weapons so you'll have to use your fists!


Complete your mission and nip back to this baby to get the hell outta there!


Ooh, it looks just like the bit where the Stormtroopers board the Rebel's ship...





Dark Forces' Darkest Secrets

If you've bought the CD-ROM Edition of PC GAMES, then by now you've probably played our amazing Dark Forces demo. But did you know that it contains loads of secret chambers? No, I didn't think so.

First off, you need thermal detonators and there's two ways of getting them. First, find the switch on the back of the pillar by the circular lift to the right of the start. Hit it and take the red elevator to the next floor and walk over to the left. Look across the gap and you'll see a tiny cubby-hole full of goodies. Jump across to get them.

By the elevator which leads to the hangar bay there's a revolving panel on the far wall (1). Move it by tapping Space, and inside you'll find absolutely loads of weapons, ammo, shields and thermal detonators.

Outside, examine the rocky walls for tiny cracks — there's one at the very back of a recess (2). By lobbing a thermal detonator, blow a hole in the wall and grab the bonuses inside.

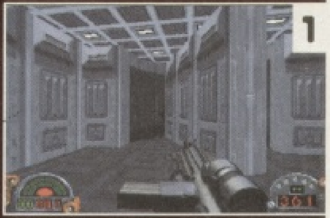
Catch the elevator to the first floor and step out onto the platform. Jump across onto the ledge where you'll find three shield power-ups and face the rock wall on the right. See the two cracks? Blow them open with detonators, jump across and take everything from inside, including the awesome Imperial Repeater.

Back up the elevator and onto the platform, walk along the ledge in front of you and jump over the gap. Look carefully and you'll see another crack in the wall and blast open the hole.

Leap into the darkness and fumble around the wall, tapping Space to open a secret door. Activate the red switch inside, then the other button off to the right (3). This lowers the wall which, if you drop off the ledge, opens up a completely new area of the level (4).

Behind the blast door lurk two Gamorrean guards (5) and a pair of grenade lobbers (6), so quickly take them out before grabbing all the weapons, power-ups and infra-red goggles from the ledges (7). Strap on the goggles (by pressing F2), enter the central chamber and attack the Interrogation Droids. Grab the remaining bonuses (8).

But now you've got your new-found weaponry, what do you use it on? There's a button on the far wall of the central chamber - press it to regenerate a load of Stormtroopers. Happy hunting!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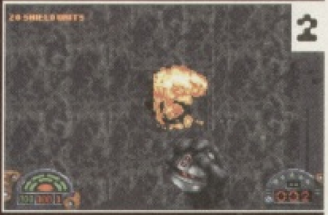
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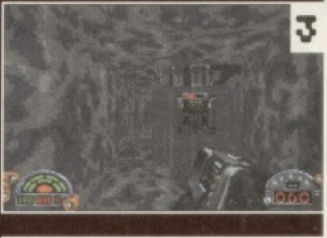
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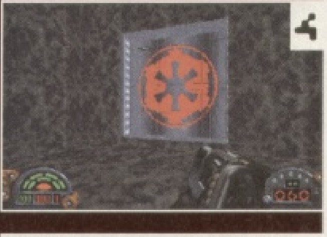
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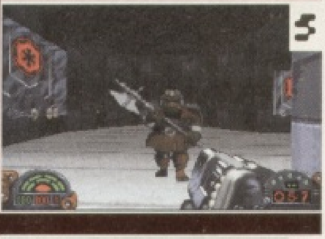
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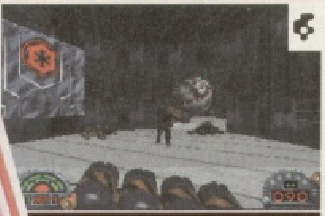
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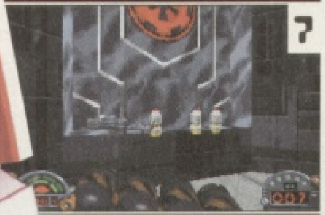
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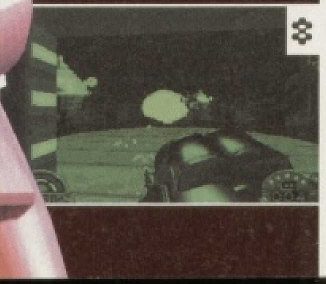
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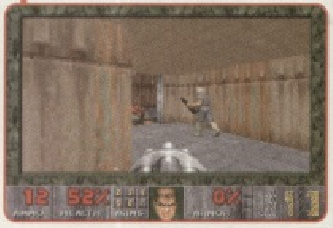
It's a bit like...

...Corridor 7, Dr Radiaki, Virtuoso, CyClones, Heretic — how many 3D shoot-'em-ups do you want me to mention? However, Doom is the only one really worth making any comparisons to. It's the ultimate gore-fest, especially in the death-match multiplayer mode. But if you're playing alone, stick with Dark Forces.



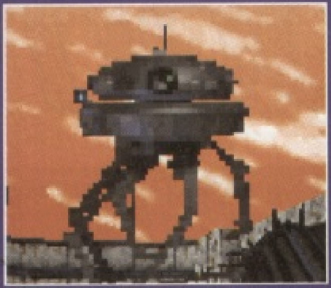
lievable — vertigo sufferers watch out!) and hangar bays filled with TIE fighters. The rocky cliffs seen in Level 3 are suitably treacherous, not just because of the ever-present Imperial troops but because one wrong step while leaping across the icy chasms could send Kyle plummeting to his, *ahem*, doom.

Swarms of Stormtroopers guard bomb-blasted cityscapes which hold vital pieces of evidence which all go to prove the elusive Dark Troopers really *do* exist, while the pit below Jabba's palace is infested with giant spike-tailed aliens with a taste for human blood. Usually a well-aimed thermal detonator would spill their guts, but Jabba's thugs have nicked your weapons so it's down to your left-hook to punch the beast out for the count!

Mission objectives are varied, Kyle first having to infiltrate an Imperial outpost where he learns of the Empire's plans to build the ultimate soldier, the robotic Dark Trooper. From here on in, Kyle zips across the galaxy, tracking the Troopers down to their source in order to crush the threat before it manages to rear its ugly head. However, the Dark Troopers don't appear until much later in the game, and for the time-being Kyle must cope with the Stormtroopers, commandos and Gamorrean guards which patrol the earlier stages.

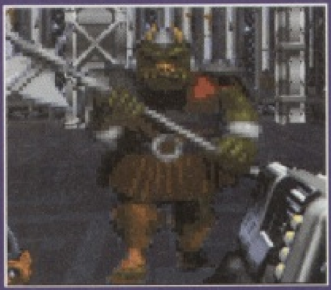
The Power Of The Dark Side

The power of the Dark Side is strong, and flows through everyone you encounter. Take a look at the many faces of the enemy...



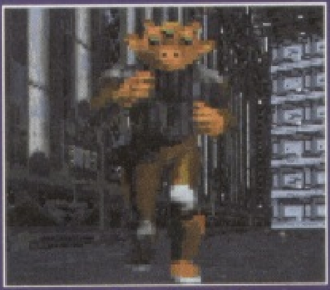
Imperial Probe Droid

Although slow, the Probe Droid is equipped with a powerful laser rifle so watch out. Stand well back when you take one of these babies out — they go off with a bang!



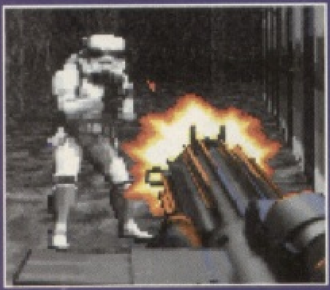
Gamorrean Guards

Thick-skinned and naturally tough, the Gamorrean guards only carry battle axes so stay back and attack with your laser rifle. In close combat, they're real pigs.



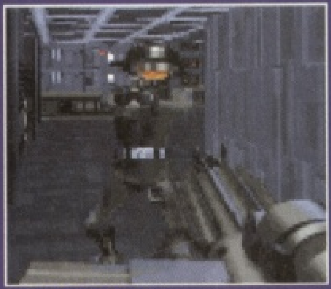
Three-Eyed Grenade Chucker

These are the ugly aliens from Jabba's palace and throw thermal detonators with surprising accuracy — side-step and strafe to take the gits out.



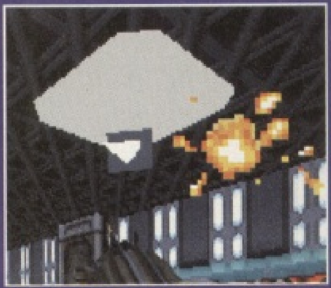
Stormtrooper

As you probably already know, Stormtroopers aren't particular intelligent, but they do carry rapid-firing laser rifles and there are absolutely loads of the buggers.



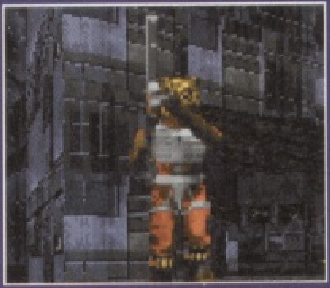
Imperial Officer

Weak and weedy, these wimps should pose little threat to a square-jawed mercenary. Just make sure you nick the ammo from their bloody corpses.



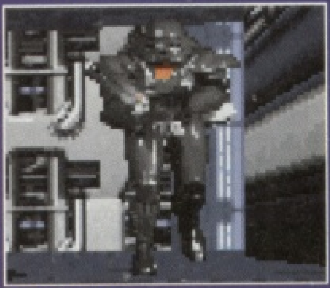
Automated Gun Turret

Now these really are a pain in the neck. Packing a powerful punch, fire from behind cover and duck back into safety when they turn to face you.



Bounty Hunter

Resembling Bossk from The Empire Strikes Back, the bounty hunters are one the toughest opponents you'll meet and attack with devastating mini-nukes.



Dark Trooper

Little's known about these, except that they are big, they are rock 'ard and they can fly.

Most of the enemies encountered in Dark Forces, namely the Stormtroopers and Imperial commandos, present little problem even in large numbers. To say they lack intelligence is an understatement — totally brainless is closer to the truth. To see Stormtroopers ducking for cover or dodging laser blasts would have been more realistic than them simply aiming in your general direction firing like crazy.

Mind you, bar-room brawling is best left for dim-witted knuckleheads, as by far the most effective method of attack is to grab a gun and start shooting. The initial single-shot pea-shooter is pathetically weak but it's accurate and saves on ammo. The rapid-firing Stormtrooper rifle is comparatively difficult to aim but, of course, you can strafe your targets. Thermal detonators and Claymore mines cause mass-destruction if used effectively, while the Mortar, Concussion rifle and the 'Huge Gun Which Covers Half The Screen' spit out apocalyptic death-dealing nukes capable of wiping out a Star Destroyer in one shot — well, almost.

Ammunition appears in short supply but can be topped up by grabbing extra clips. Power cells replenish your personal shield generator (which offers some protection against laser blasts) and coloured keys give access to locked security doors. The infra-red goggles allow Kyle to see in the dark but they require batteries, as does the respirator mask. Extra lives can be found if you look hard enough (Dark Forces is packed with secret rooms filled with goodies).

But that's about your lot. In my opinion, Dark Forces is *the* best Doom clone around, and is one of the few games to offer something over id's classic. Graphically it's much cleaner and crisper than Doom, thanks to LucasArts sophisticated Jedi 3D engine. The character sprites are actually three-dimensional as opposed to the 'flat' enemies as seen in Doom, and although the graphics do tend to pixilate as you close in, Dark Force is no where near as block-tastic and has a more refined, polished feel to it.

Running on a Pentium the game is an absolute dream, moving without so much as a jerk. On a lower spec machine, say a 33MHz 486, scrolling is obviously not as slick and occasionally judders when the screen is cluttered with Stormtroopers. However, the display can be reduced in size to compensate for your lack of processing power.

The otherwise-perfect presentation is flawed by only one thing, in fact — the sound, which consists of bland musical scores which, while not being *that* bad, are repetitive and soon become annoying. The sound effects, which have been lifted directly from the movies, are excellent though, as are generous lumps of sampled speech.

In fact, the only feature missing from Dark Forces is the inclusion of a network/serial-link option. Death-match Doom added another dimension to an already outstanding game and boosted the lasting appeal ten-fold. Dark Forces is a solo game only, so while you'll have untold fun playing on your own, if you want a multi-player blood-bath you're looking in the wrong place.

So there you have it. Possibly 1995's most eagerly-awaited game is great... no, make that fantastic. It's easily as good as Doom, and with a multi-player option it would have been better. Dark Forces is definitely an essential purchase — compared to this, everything else is just Bantha fodder.

DARK FORCES$^{\text{CD}}$

VIRGIN/LUCASARTS

(0181) 960 2255

£49.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM **SPEC**

33MHz 486, VGA, 8Mb RAM and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO **SUPPORTS**

Mouse; Joystick; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

THE ***GOOD...***

- Visually it's crisper and less pixelly than Doom.
- Brilliantly addictive and wonderfully challenging.
- It's Doom *and* Star Wars in one perfect package!

...AND THE ***BAD***

- No multi-player option has been included.
- There just aren't enough hours in the day to play Dark Forces!

Overall

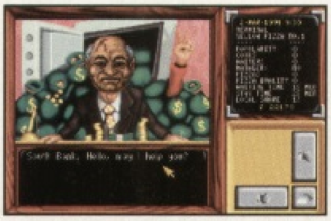
94%

Pizza Tycoon

Dean Evans sprinkles the mozzarella in Pizza Tycoon. But is it packed full of wholesome goodness, or just a half-baked idea?

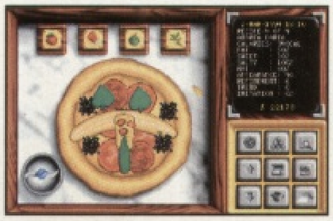
If Pizza Hut's new recipe leaves you cold and you'd rather chew your own boots than suffer the dough at the Deep Pan Pizza Company, then MicroProse has just the thing for you. In Pizza Tycoon you get to start your own little pizza restaurant and develop the business into a chain stretching all over Europe and even into the USA.

Pizza Tycoon is basically an open-ended business game. You control a whole host of variables, from the location of your pizzerias to the toppings you pile onto your bases. There are options a-plenty, right from the word go and although the wealth of options can be a bit overwhelming, once you dig deeper into the game you soon discover that it's very engaging indeed.



(Above) The manager of the Midbarclanatwestoyds Bank. Looks like he's got too much of my dosh already.

(Below) What have we got here? Banana and caviar pizza — yum! Not surprising I went out of business in the first month, is it?



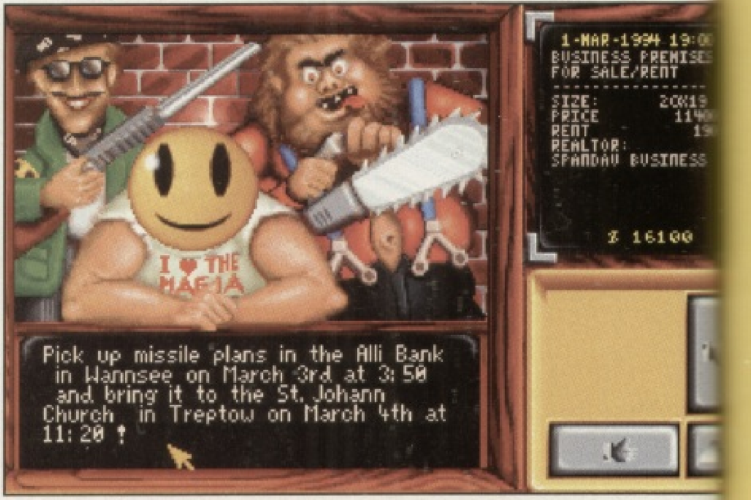
Several features make it all very accessible. Firstly, the player interface is very simple and all the point-and-click icons are fairly obvious. Then there's the overall graphical feel which uses cartoon graphics and visual, pizza-oriented gags to put you at ease. Yes, this *is* a business game, but *no* it won't be boring. The sound isn't much cop to be honest, but the atmosphere doesn't suffer much as a result.

To start with, you must choose a character to control. With a hundred on offer, each with their own skills and faults, there are plenty of ways to approach the game. Then you pick a city to start your company in, and you're off. What you do from then on is up to you. Want to go up market and start a transcontinental chain of restaurants specialising in lobster and caviar pizzas? Go right ahead. Feel like making chocolate pizzas for homeless kids in Paris? Feel free. As long as you don't go bust, anything's fair game.

What, though, happens once you start sussing out the pizza-making business and how it works? Well, MicroProse have had a few great ideas for keeping the game interesting in the long term too — apart from the mechanics of setting things up and keeping them going, using market research and keeping track of all the statistics as the money rolls in. For starters there's the question of careers.

There are two types of CV you can build up over the years, either as a famous personality, becoming a big cheese in the pizza world and a major civic figure, or as an underworld boss. Yes, it seems that the mafia have got their fingers into the pizza, and if you fancy life on the edge there's a killing to be made out of shady criminal activities (quite literally, once you've progressed above being a mere lackey).

Naturally you might opt for a bit of both, using your contacts in the Cosa Nostra to help you get the edge over your pizza empire competitors. After all, it becomes difficult to concentrate on their business when they're trying to swim with concrete boots on. You can even take a flamethrower to their tables and chairs in an interesting little graphical action section.



```
1-MAR-1994 19:0
BUSINESS PREMISE
FOR SALE/RENT
---------------
SIZE:        20X19
PRICE         114
RENT           19
REALTOR:
SPANDAU BUSINESS

      $ 16100
```

```
Pick up missile plans in the Alli Bank
 in Wannsee on March 3rd at 3:50
 and bring it to the St. Johann
Church  in Treptow on March 4th at
11:20 !
```

(Above) Would you accept an employer with a face like that? Yes? Congratulations — you'll go far in the world of gourmet pizza.

On top of that, if you fancy a bit more order in your game, you can take on one of the 'mission' scenarios, where you're given a specific CV to achieve, and to fulfil each stage at the appointed time. Some of them are frighteningly tough, too.

And then, once you're bored of all that, there's the multi-player option to consider. By taking turns on a day at a time basis, up to eight human players can fight it out, sneaking into each others' kitchens and dropping laxatives into the ingredients over night. All the action takes place on just one PC, without the need for serial links, modems or any other sort of high-tech malarkey.

Pizza Tycoon has stacks of features, neatly arranged on a firm base of decent gameplay. Okay, it may not turn out to be your particular cup of dried leaves in boiled water, but it's a unique and strangely addictive business sim nonetheless.

PIZZA TYCOON

MICROPROSE/IN-HOUSE

(01454) 326532

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb of RAM and 7Mb of hard disk space

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- It's a very competent business game, once you get past the cartoon graphics and one-line gags.
- The cartoon graphics and one-line gags help spice it all up.
- The multi-player option makes for an interesting challenge.

...AND THE BAD

- Deep down it's still an accountant's game about profit margins and balance sheets.
- It's hardy the easiest game to get into, what with a host of factors to keep an eye on from the first day.

Overall

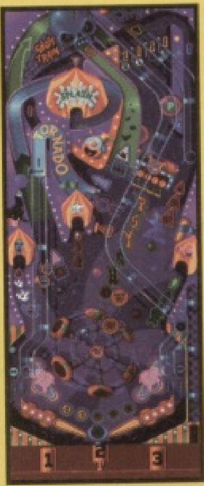
84%

No. 3 in a series
THE ART OF PINBALL

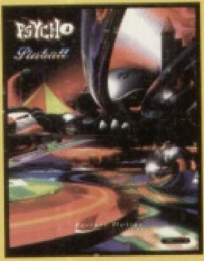
PSYCHO Pinball™

Okay, **speed freaks,** try holding onto your stomach when your reflexes attempt to keep up with this non-stop, head - screaming ride of pure pinball adrenaline. This is **PSYCHO PINBALL,** so called 'cos it's bleedin' **PSYCHOTIC.** Get this inside y': Four all-new mind-blowing tables with over **100 features** in each, rocking music, speech, 220+ real-play sound fx and - no slow down - 3-ball m-m-m- **multi ball.** AND we've done the whole thing with **interactive vector reflection** so, for once, you get a pinball game that actually feels RIGHT. Just don't blame us if you can't hack the **pace.**

A STICK
B HIT



A Perfect Motion
SIMULATION



Codemasters

THE FASTEST PINBALL SIM YOU'LL EXPERIENCE

Available on:

PC DISKS [5]
CD-ROM [ENHANCED]

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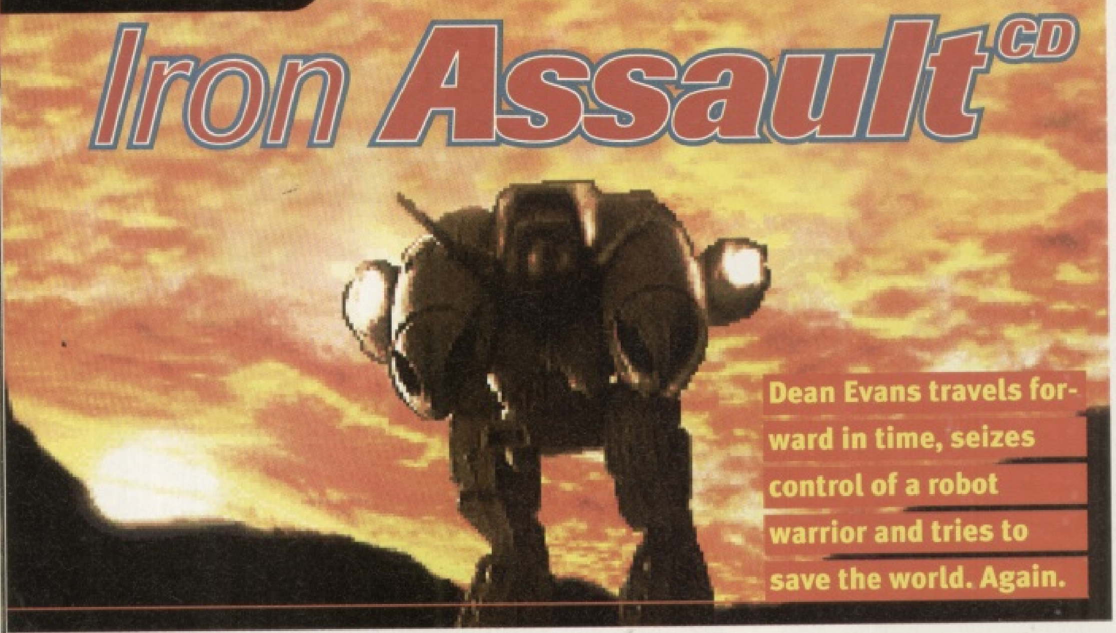
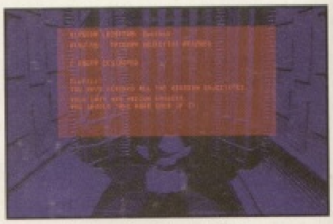
Codemasters: Telephone: 01 926 814 132 Facsimile: 01 926 817 595

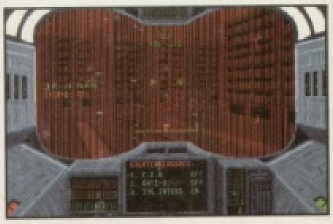
Iron Assault CD



Dean Evans travels forward in time, seizes control of a robot warrior and tries to save the world. Again.



Every mission ends with a debriefing screen, which tells you whether you completed your primary and secondary goals and how well you treated your Unit.



Special FX are few and far between but - like this infra-red image enhancer from one of the basic Units - they are well implemented.

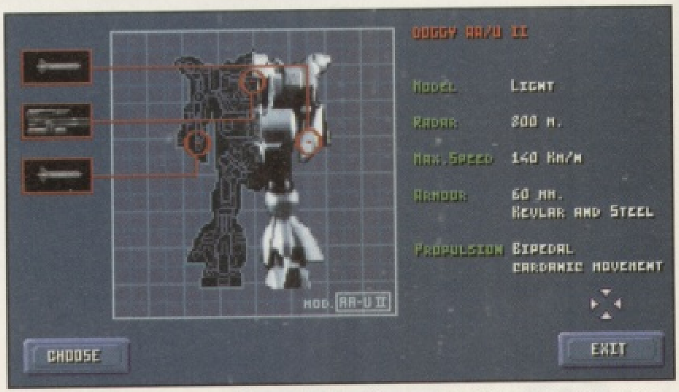
Everyone says that worldwide corporations are A Bad Thing. Apart from making too much money, using unethical sales techniques, ruining the environment and destroying local cultures, they also make rubbish toasters that burn one side and leave the other untouched. How these companies will ever create a race of super-robots capable of dominating the Earth is beyond me.

Still, that's what happens in Iron Assault. A few years from now, everyone will fall asleep for about eight decades while a big business syndicate conquers the world with the help of some well-armed robots, known as Units. In 2082, downtrodden mankind will eventually wake up to the fascists' evil plot, form a rebel resistance, steal some Unit technology and start to fight back.

It's now 2094, and you play the role of a rookie Unit pilot stationed at the rebels' Unicorn Base in America. Many tough missions lie ahead. Complete them successfully and you could rise rapidly through the ranks and determine global strategy. Fail, and the corporate fiends will rule the Earth forever.

A nifty opening animation, consisting of atmospher grainy FMV footage and some melodramatic commentary, provides a summary of this plot for those who can't or won't read the manual. After that, you create a personal log in one of five available saved game slots, and suddenly find yourself in a grubby room at Unicorn Base. Your room contains two vital features: a personal log and the World Net computer (WNET). The log details your achievements, including your success rate in missions. This is important, because failure to complete your main mission objectives can hinder promotion and will eventually cost you the game.

The WNET terminal has many uses. It connects you to other rebel forces, gives you the latest news on the war against the syndicates and provides details of the next mission - including primary and secondary objectives, a scenario map and behind-the-lines video footage. You can also choose the Unit you wish to pilot and select the weapons that suit your combat style. Initially the hardware choices are limited, but research and theft gradually increase the range of options open to you.



DOGGY AA/U II

MODEL LIGHT

RADAR 800 M.

MAX.SPEED 140 KM/H

ARMOUR 60 MM. KEVLAR AND STEEL

PROPULSION BIPEDAL CARDANIC MOVEMENT

The presentation screens are nothing special. Apart from some brief video sequences, all you get are a few rudimentary still graphics and some simple windows.

There are two ways to play Iron Assault. The Simulator allows you to sample four terrain types at no personal cost, and also gives you the chance to play a head-to-head shoot-out against a friend. The Career option, which involves a succession of missions eventually leading to promotion and the strategy side of the game, is ultimately a more satisfying choice. The arcade action is basically the same in both.

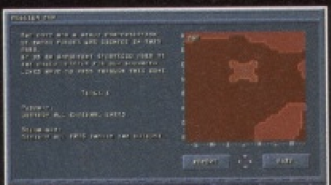
The first few missions are well graded. Enemy numbers increase slowly, there are few really tough opponents and the goals are simple - kill things and collect items. Each begins in the same way: you're dropped in the war zone and left to get on with it. Sometimes you have a strict time limit, but mostly you have plenty of time to make mistakes. Whatever your mission, it isn't long before you're drawn into combat with syndicate forces.

All of the Units available to you are well equipped to deal with any threat. Each has a radar, a map or scanner,

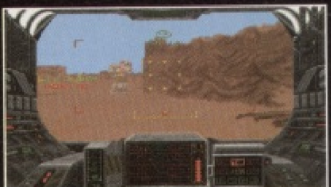
Mission *Possible*

The first challenge in Iron Assault is to complete a series of missions and gain promotion. After a while things start to get tough - but you don't become a General without a little effort...

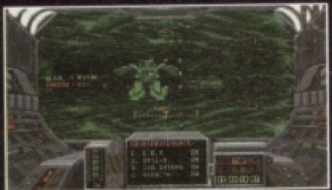
Logging on to the World NET computer (WNET) provides useful information: mission objectives, maps, video footage, technological developments and weapons.



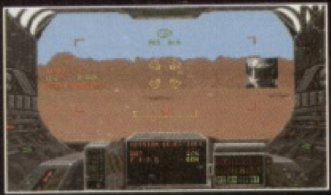
In the drop zone, your primary objective is to destroy all enemy units in the surrounding terrain, starting with this one. The radar reveals plenty of action ahead.



The secondary mission requires you to penetrate an enemy depot and kill everything that moves. It's a little dark at first - but your Unit's image intensifier helps.

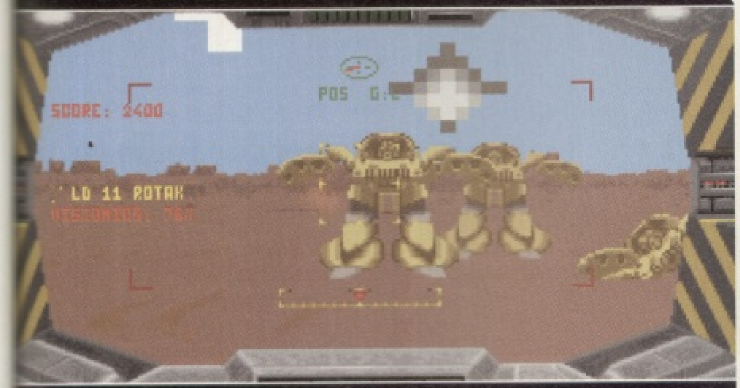


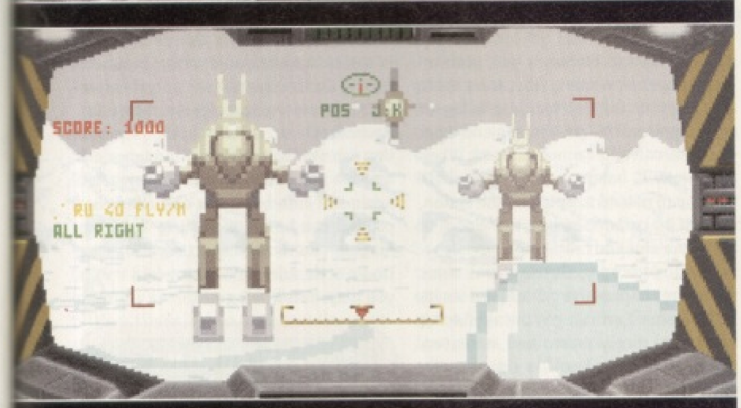
Having achieved your secondary target but only half of your primary goal, you decide it's time to leave. Your Unit is badly damaged and you have no weapons of any worth.

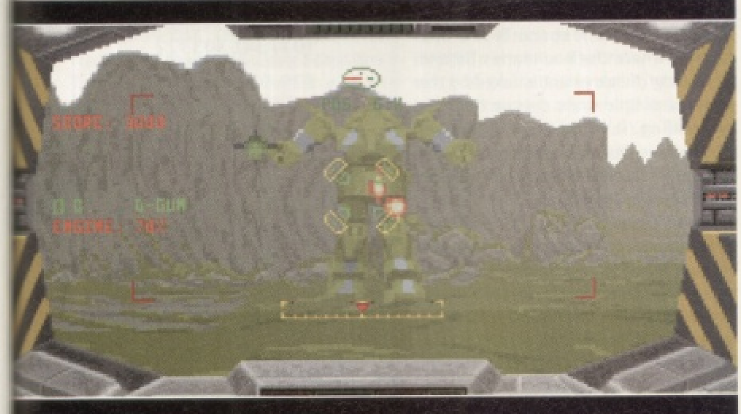


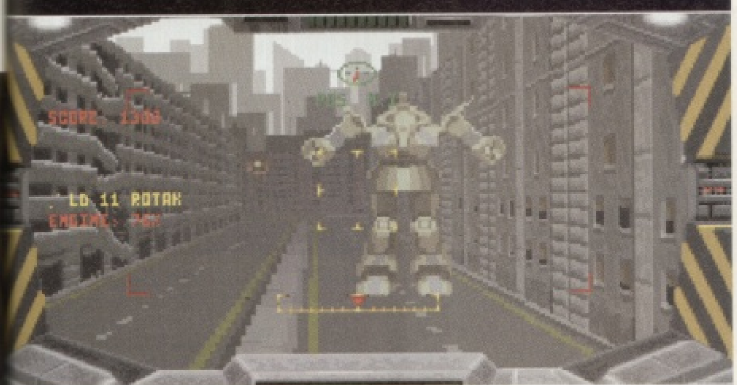
All-Terrain Vehicle

Your Unit is capable of functioning in all kinds of environments. Iron Assault's handy Simulator lets you sample four of these in advance: desert, Antarctic, mountains and city. Your instructions as a solo player are to destroy everything that moves; in two-player mode you can link two PCs together and play head-to-head against a friend.









It's a bit like...

...EarthSiege. Sierra's contribution to the post-holocaust robotic warrior theme features polygon-based graphics and a wider variety of views than Virgin's effort. The presentation is also superior, with a choice of quick start games or a career, variable mission parameters and more imagination in the menu graphics. As a whole, EarthSiege offers the more serious and more satisfying challenge.

damage reports, a targetting facility, a variety of counter-measures (including ECM, image intensifiers, stealth and anti-missile), a range of weapons, a cargo bay, mission summary, compass and Heads-Up Display. Some Units are less manoeuvrable than others, but all have rear and side views as well as a standard forward view. A cockpit monitor also contains more detailed maps and is particularly useful when you're leading a squadron.

Success guarantees promotion. Initially, this allows you to control a group of pilots on more complex missions, but once you attain the rank of Colonel you also get the chance to take over enemy bases and gain control of a whole continent. The action is transformed into a delicate tactical balance between destroying enemy factories and depots and ensuring your own installations are well protected. Once you've reached the rank of General you're able to move between each of the four continents, keeping an eye on the state of war in each.

This range of options and controls sounds impressive, but in practice it's a bit disappointing. For a start, the presentation is a let-down. The WNET screens and the log are little more than functional, with unsophisticated graphics (particularly the crude maps). The interface is a tad clumsy, with constant switching between menus and separate overlaid windows used for actions such as weapons selection. It's all too fiddly.

The graphics aren't much better. I personally feel that a polygon-based approach is more successful because it allows a greater variety of views and is well suited to a robot theme. Iron Assault's sprite-based 3D looks pretty at first but has many limitations: it's crude in close-up, it doesn't give you any external views, the backgrounds are repetitive and the sprite animations can look unrealistic.

I had a bigger problem with the arcade side of the game as a whole. Shooting enemies, destroying bases and collecting objects quickly becomes monotonous, especially if you're searching the terrain for that last elusive opponent. Fortunately, the designers have provided some relief from the general tedium with occasional surprises, such as new enemy technology, different lighting effects and a little variety in the landscapes. These touches just about manage to hold your interest until you gain promotion, when the action diversifies into team control and tactics.

There's just one final minor criticism: the tongue-in-cheek humour grates very quickly. Whenever you destroy an enemy Unit the action is punctuated by 'amusing' statements (such as "Damn, I'm good") delivered in an outrageous American accent. These are funny the first couple of times you hear them, but after that they get annoying and you're forced to turn them off. Why bother including them in the first place?

This isn't a bad game, but it's far from being an essential addition to your collection. There are plenty of neat little effects (for example, the background landscape is destroyed if you miss your target) and the progressive mission structure provides just enough variety to keep you going, but there are just too many flaws to make it a 'must buy'. If the graphics, sound and shoot-'em-up action matched the quality of the basic idea, this would be a great game. But they don't, and it isn't.

IRON ASSAULT^{CD}

VIRGIN/GRAFFITI

(0181) 960 2255

£34.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4MB RAM, CD-ROM drive and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- Plenty of arcade action.
- Just enough surprises to keep you interested.
- Long-term tactical challenge.

...AND THE BAD

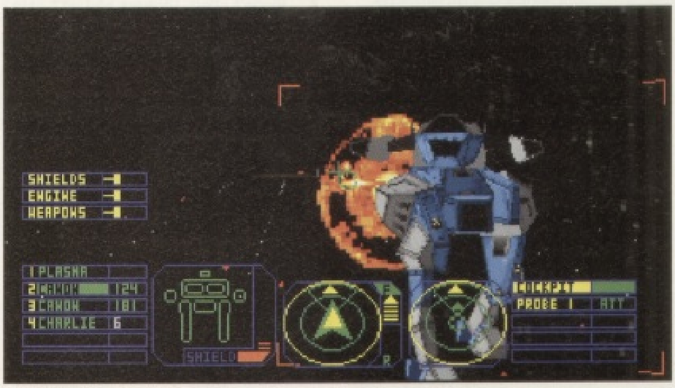
- Graphics and sound are all a bit disappointing.
- Presentation is mediocre.
- The action sequences become repetitive after a few missions.

Overall

55%

Battledrome

Dean Evans stomps around in Sierra's new multi-player robot sim.



(Above) The HERCS are impressively detailed and beautifully animated — even more so than their equivalents in the well-received prequel, EarthSiege.

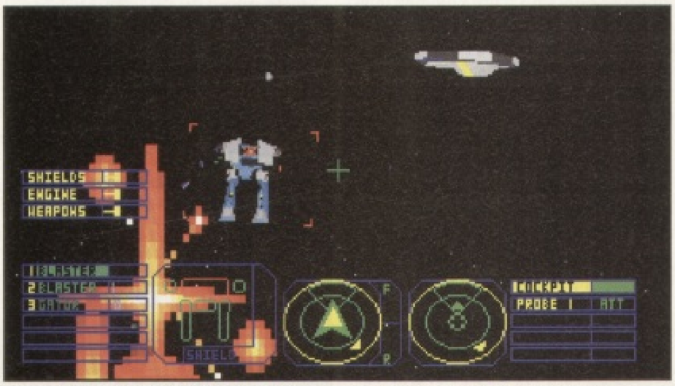
(Above) On this screen you can tool up your HERC — if you've got the cash, of course.

Typical. You wait ages for a robot combat game to come along and then three of the buggers arrive at all at once. Last month we had Sierra's EarthSiege, this month Virgin has chipped in with Iron Assault and now Sierra is trying to monopolise the robo-war market with yet another Gouraud-shaded, texture-mapped battle simulation, a robot game that goes by the name of Battledrome.

Set after the events in EarthSiege, Battledrome takes place in a gloomy gladiatorial arena as opposed to pretty pastel-coloured landscapes or ruined cities. You see, the war against the Cybrids has been won and mankind, who now has hundreds of robotic death-machines (called HERCS) lying around gathering dust, has set up the Battledrome Robotic Combat Network, a TV entertainment spectacular where skilled HERC pilots battle it out against each other in the ultimate mechanical punch-up.

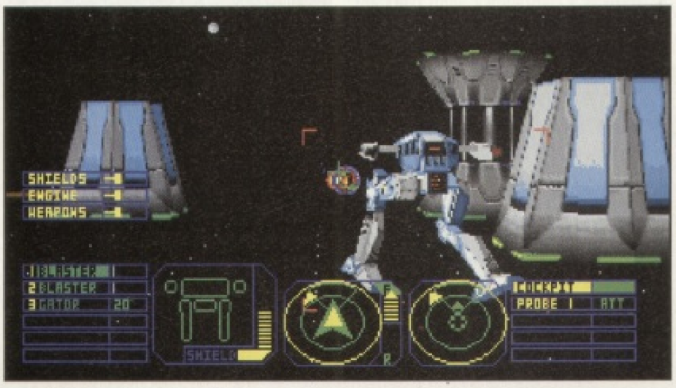
Unlike EarthSiege, the gameplay in Battledrome is fairly basic. You start the game with the cheapest HERC money can buy, and once you've equipped it with armour, remote camera probes and a variety of lasers, missiles and blasters, you simply pick a suitable opponent and slug it out until one of you has been destroyed. If you win, you're awarded a sack-load of prize money and you get to move up the Battledrome ranking. If you lose, on the other hand, you don't get a sausage and you have to spend your valuable Cyber-savings repairing the battle damage to your HERC.

When you issue a challenge to a rival HERC pilot (or you're challenged by an opponent), you enter a negotiation phase where you and your foe can customise the battle arena that you're going to fight in. Between you, you can haggle over how many obstacles there are, whether the Battledrome is big or small, how much light there is and what weapons can and cannot be used. When everybody is happy, and any side-bets have been placed to spice up the action, your HERC is dumped into the gloom of the arena and into battle.



(Above) This is what Battledrome is all about — just you, your opponent, and... er... sod all else actually, apart from a few dots on the floor.

(Below) Ohmigod! Look — there are some objects in the arena!



Unsurprisingly, Battledrome uses the same, impressive 3D engine as its sister game EarthSiege, but while the robots are nicely drawn and animated, the Battledrome itself is ridiculously sparse. It reminds me of the old arcade classic Battlezone, because the arena is just one big, dark space; a red line denotes where the boundaries lie and the feeling of movement is faked by the presence of little white dots on the floor and ceiling. It could have been very atmospheric, but the background detail is so poor that the robots often seem out of place against it.

To be fair, the background detail has probably been kept to a minimum because Battledrome can also be played as a multi-player game. In fact, if you have a network, a fast modem or a serial cable and two PCs, then this is how Battledrome really should be played. Battling against the computer-controlled HERCS can often become very monotonous, but stalking a real person around a darkened arena is much more fun, despite the fact that your HERCS are about agile as an elephant trapped in a bungalow.

Although it doesn't look it, Battledrome is a fairly nice game. It's easy to get into and fun to play (for a while, at least), but as a single-player blast it hasn't got the pull that EarthSiege has. If you're never going to link up over the Net and play a human opponent, then the severe lack of depth in the gameplay and the extremely basic arena graphics may well frustrate and disappoint you in the long-term. If this is the case, then you'd be far better off buying EarthSiege.

As a multi-player game, however, Battledrome does much better. The battles can still be a bit slow and laborious and the gameplay often boils down to a series of head-on chicken runs, but combat can be quite exciting — just as long as you're not expecting a massive Doom-style adrenalin rush when you play. You won't get it.

BATTLEDROME

SIERRA/DYNAMIX

(01734) 303322

£39.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and 10Mb of hard disk space

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; All major soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- The Gouraud-shaded, texture-mapped robots are superbly animated.
- The multi-player option adds a new dimension to the gameplay.
- The music isn't bad either.

...AND THE BAD

- After you've played it for a while, it becomes a bit dull.
- The HERCS aren't the fastest vehicles you'll ever drive.
- All the Battledrome arenas are incredibly dull.

Overall

73%

Knights Of Xentar^CD

David Upchurch suffers severe disappointment with MegaTech's Zelda-inspired RPG.

While I realise that, as Editor of this magazine, I'm supposed to tirelessly wave the flag for all things even vaguely PC-related, for the purposes of this review I must (briefly) extoll the virtues of a game on another format, namely Zelda: Link's Awakening on the GameBoy.

As anyone who knows me will tell you, I can bore for Britain on the subject of how good Zelda is. It's basically an RPG, in which you take on the role of the elf-like Link as he explores a fantasy world full of monsters, traps and dungeons. Although phenomenally simple to play (there are no stats, spell menus, inventory screens or guff like that), it's a billion times more entertaining and challenging than any other RPG I can think of — and I can think of quite a few.

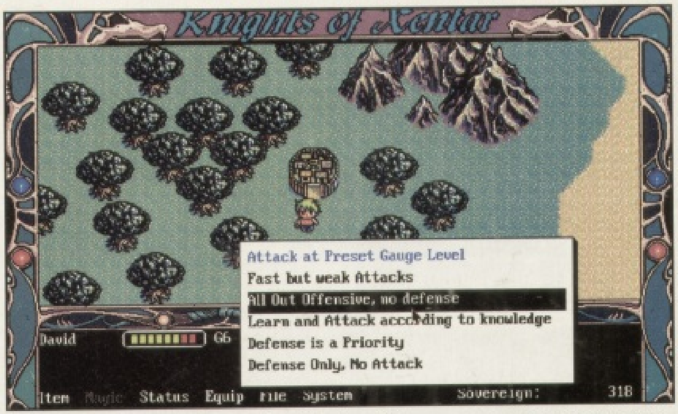
So, when Knights Of Xentar landed on my desk I have to admit that I got a bit over-excited. From the pictures on the back of the box it seemed that here was all the magic and mystery of my beloved Zelda recreated on PC! However, as I was soon to learn, appearances can be very deceptive...

Sadly for Knights Of Xentar, everything goes a bit pear-shaped as soon as the game's lengthy intro starts. Personally, I always thought the purpose of intros was to set the scene and explain the plot. On the evidence here, however, that's an alien concept to MegaTech, the game's creators. Frankly, I didn't have a *clue* what was going on — something about women being turned into demons and some bloke called Desmond trying find a magic sword, as far as I could gather.

And although the Manga-style graphics were very attractive (if largely animation-free), my enjoyment was further marred by the incredibly crap speech. The voice of Desmond, the game's hero (and don't worry — you can rename him), is performed by someone who seems to be attempting a very bad impression of Bill and Ted. Annoying is not the word.

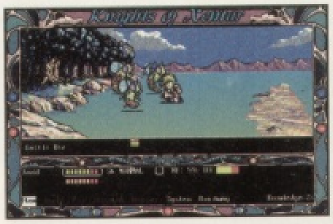
But hey — you can't judge a game on its intro, can you? Which is a shame because in this case the intro's a masterpiece compared to the rest of it. For starters, the control system is an absolute joke. It's clumsy to use in the first place, but because you automatically enter a conversation every time you bump into somebody (even accidentally, which happens a lot, just getting from A to B is a tedious adventure in itself. In a game like this, where so much of your time is spent exploring, such annoyances are unforgiveable.

Combat is feeble too. You have no direct control over the battle — all you can decide is how Desmond fights (i.e. all-out attack, a 50/50 mix of attacking and defending, etc). The game then calculates the outcome of the battle depending on the relative stats of each party. Wow, like, *really* exciting.



Attack at Preset Gauge Level
Fast but weak Attacks
All Out Offensive, no defense
Learn and Attack according to knowledge
Defense is a Priority
Defense Only, No Attack

(Above) From the basic-looking panel at the bottom of the screen you can bring up Desmond's combat menu, which lets you select how you'd like him to fight...
(Below left) ...You have no direct control over Desmond once he's in a scrap, apart from telling him when to use magic or to flee. It's not very satisfying or exciting.



Knights of Xentar

And then there's the quests themselves, all of which are totally uninteresting. Most of them simply entail going to a location, killing something, and then returning home. There are no clever puzzles to solve or obscure clues to piece together — indeed, the game contains almost nothing to tax the old grey matter at all.

But perhaps the most depressing thing about this game is the appalling way it treats its female characters. Throughout the adventure these big-eyed, big-breasted fantasy figures do nothing more than get beaten up or semi-raped by gangs of thugs, monsters and demons, and then rescued by the heroic Desmond. Saddoes might like to know that there's also an 18-rated version of the game in which you get treated to the odd glimpse of nipple. Unfortunately, however, a dirty mac is not included.

KNIGHTS OF XENTAR^CD

MEGATECH/IN-HOUSE
(0101-310) 539 6452
£49.95 OUT NOW (IMPORT)

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 4Mb of hard disk space and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Pro Audio Spectrum, ThunderBoard and Aria soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- The visual style is very appealing — if you like Manga.
- So simple that even Forrest Gump could play it...

...AND THE BAD

- ...But that's too simple for the average PC gamer.
- Often misogynistic in a *very* distasteful way.

Overall

32%

Discworld CD

David Upchurch, mirth muscles quivering in anticipation, explores Psygnosis' Terry Pratchett tie-in...

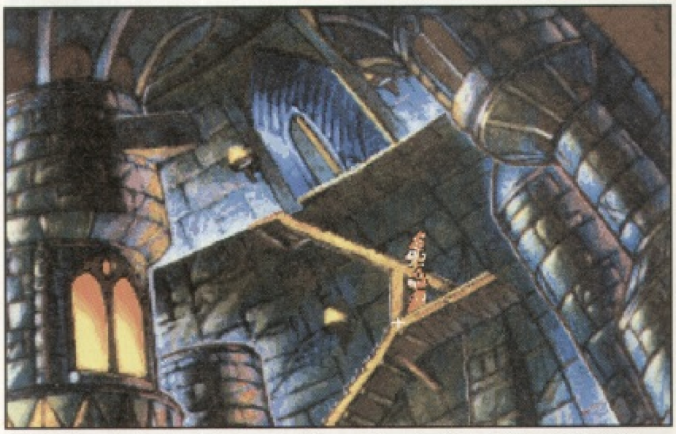
When the plucky chaps and chappesses at Psygnosis announced that they were planning to turn Terry Pratchett's vastly-popular and critically acclaimed series of Discworld novels into a game, I didn't envy them the task one little bit. Agreed, from a purely commercial point-of-view a computer game based around the strange denizens of Pratchett's richly-detailed universe is a very attractive proposition. After all, even if only a tiny fraction of Pratchett's loyal literary following buys the game, you're going to have a hit of truly monstrous proportions on your hands.

The problem is that some of Pratchett's more die-hard fans make Trekkers (or Trekkies, or whatever those sad Klingon-spouting acolytes of Star Trek call themselves these days) seem positively sane and well-adjusted normal human beings in comparison.

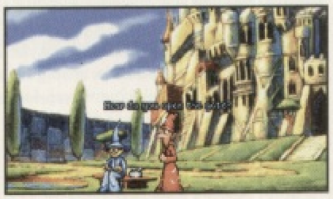
You see, no matter how faithful the finished game is to the sacred source material, there's bound to be a vociferous band of rabid fans who won't take kindly to having their cherished imaginary fantasy world brought to 256-colour pixellated life, and will write whinging letters to computer mags about Rincewind's beard being the wrong shape or Death's voice being too high. Indeed, the potential backlash from outraged Discworld devotees could make the Salman Rushdie affair look like a playground scrap between two five-year-olds.

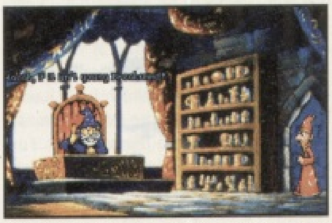
Given all this, it would have been easy for an unscrupulous softco to say "Sod the fans — they'll only moan whatever we do. Let's just make a pot-load of cash" and for them then to release a cynical, shoddy, rushed-out money-maker. However, that's definitely not the case with Discworld. It's a classy, good-looking, well-designed game, and it's obvious that Psygnosis and developers Teeny Weeny Games have spent a lot of time and effort ensuring that it'll not only satisfy the afficionados, but that it'll also appeal to gamers for whom 'Terry Pratchett' means about as much as 'natural lipozomes'.

Discworld follows the zany graphic misadventures of the wizard Rincewind as he attempts to rid the city of Ankh-Morpork of a particularly nasty dragon infestation. Although the game's plot isn't based on that of any particular Discworld novel, it's been overseen and approved by Terry Pratchett himself and features many of the series' most popular characters, so as you play you can expect to bump into nearly all of your Discworld favourites, including the curry-loving Death, the gormless tourist Twoflower and, of course, the multi-legged Luggage.

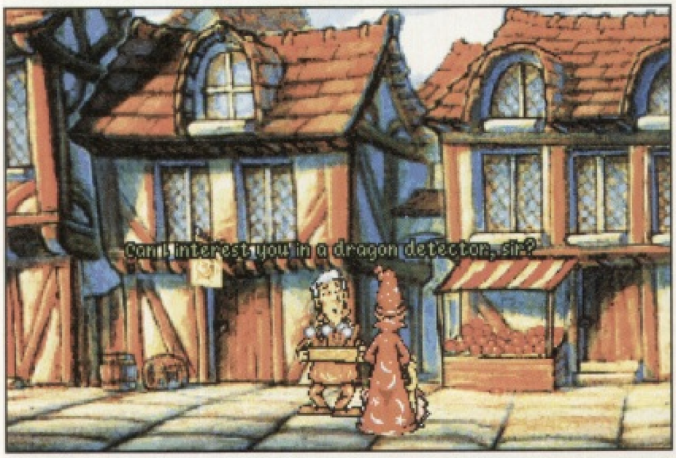


(Above) Rincewind explores the bowels of Unseen University. Many of the game's lavishly-depicted locations are bigger than a screen, and so they scroll as you move around.





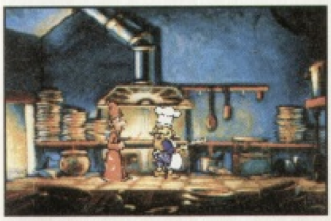
(Above) Discworld is full of really witty, adult and highly sophisticated humour...



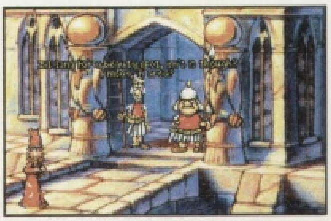
(Above) If you thought finding the dragon would be as simple as buying a detector from this dodgy street-corner vendor, then you must be more stupid than you look. Which is very.

It's a bit like...

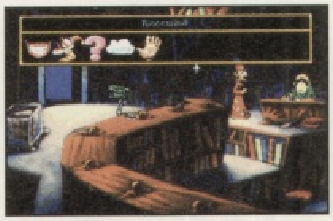
...Kyrandia 3: Malcolm's Revenge. Both games come on CD, feature loads of lovely animations and digitised speech, and are comedy adventures in a fantasy-inspired setting. However, Malcolm's Revenge suffers from some infuriatingly silly puzzles, a limited number of game locations and, worst of all, a complete lack of humour — not a good thing for a comic adventure.



Something's cooking in the kitchen — and Rincewind thinks it smells a bit fishy...



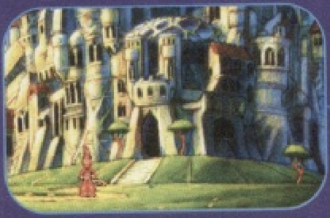
These guards are impossible to get past — until you exploit their hatred of each other...



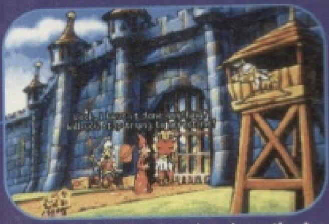
While you can't choose *what* you say, those icons let you control *how* you say things.

Oh-ha-ha, please stop — I think my sides are going to split...

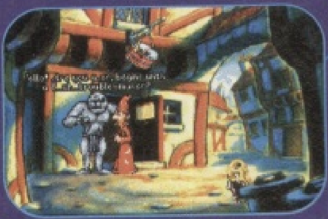
The **Hitchhiker's** Guide To *Ankh-Morpork*



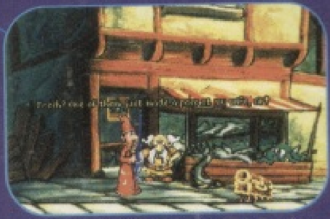
Unseen University — where generations of really crap wizards have learnt their trade.



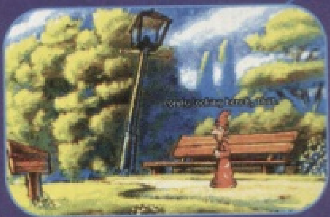
The guards don't have much to do, so they've taken to arresting people for the hell of it.



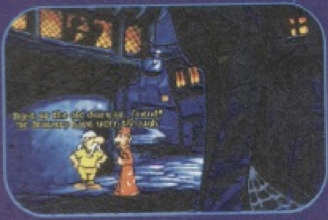
Don't try to be clever with the bouncers at the inn — you'll only get hurt.



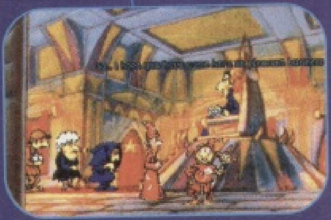
The fish merchant has an appalling line in jokes — like most of the city's citizens.



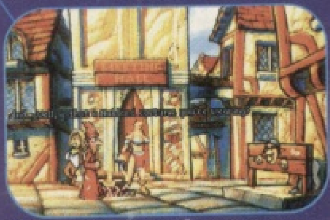
The park is a pleasant, quiet place to relax, especially as it's totally deserted.



In the city's dark back-streets you'll meet plenty of colourful cut-throats.



The Patrician is the ruler of Ankh-Morpork. Be warned — he doesn't suffer fools gladly.



In the market square you're likely to meet Red Sorghum, a sexy warrior woman.

Already I'll bet some readers are moaning that turning Discworld into a graphic adventure is an obvious and slightly uninspired idea, but given the 'wordy' nature of the subject matter it's the most appropriate and sensible approach to take. After all, let's be honest — would you really want to play Discworld: The Platform Game?

Admittedly, as far as graphic adventures go, Discworld is fairly traditional. As you'd expect there are dozens of beautifully-painted locations to explore (if nothing else, Discworld is great value for money — the game is absolutely *huge*), scores of weird and wonderful creatures to chat to, and hundreds of objects to pick up and use with other objects to solve a myriad of cunning puzzles (which, though tricky, are refreshingly logical — this isn't another Kyrandia 3, thank goodness).

However, although *what* you do holds few surprises, there are several innovations as regards *how* you do things. For a start, the player interface is one of the most elegant and easy-to-use I've ever seen in a graphic adventure. There are no unattractive icon banks or inventory panels cluttering up the screen — instead, everything is kept neatly and tidily out-of-sight, out-of-mind.The intelligent cursor helpfully highlights any items of interest, and then they can either be examined, picked up or used by simply clicking with the left and/or right mouse buttons. Any items you've collected are stored in a pop-up inventory 'window', which you summon by clicking on Rincewind or (when you've found it) the Luggage. It's all very clever, yet very simple and practical.

Of course, the best thing about this interface is that it lets you enjoy those sumptuous hand-painted graphics in all their full-screen, 256-colour glory. They really are quite special — each of the characters is excellently drawn and superbly animated, and the location backgrounds, many of which scroll, are just exquisite.

Discworld is also a bit of a stunner in the sound department too. This is a full 'talkie' adventure, with each character's 'lines' performed by a troupe of professional actors and actresses, most notably Eric 'Monty Python' Idle (who breathes comic life into Rincewind), Tony 'Baldric' Robinson, John 'Dr Who' Pertwee and Kate 'Spitting Image' Robbins. These are people who know how to deliver a funny line, and they bring their skills to bear here to great effect. (And from a purely patriotic point-of-view, it's nice to hear an adventure free of American voices for once!)

But the big questions is: is Discworld funny? Well, yes — although it goes without saying that if you've read the novels and found them about as amusing as a lobotomy, then you're likely to feel the same about Discworld. Actually, given that the game's script wasn't actually written by Pratchett, Psygnosis and Teeny Weeny Games have done a remarkable job of capturing his style and humour.

So far, then, everything seems all sweetness and light. In the last few paragraphs I've established that Discworld looks and sounds great, that the interface is brilliantly easy-to-use, that the puzzles are entertainingly, er, puzzly and that — thank goodness — it's funny. So what's the problem? Well, strangely enough, it's that humour I was praising just a few, short sentences ago. Put simply, it gets in the way of the actual game.

Almost every character seems to have their own lengthy comic sceneor sketch that you have to sit through when you talk to them. And while these scenes *are* amusing, they have a tendency to drag on a bit. Often there are times when you're trying to solve a puzzle and you just wish they'd shut up so you could get on with things. True, you can click to skip through the speech, but as you're never sure what information is important to your quest and what's not, it's a bit risky.

As long as you have the patience to cope with this, chances are you'll find Discworld a solid, entertaining and often hilarious graphic adventuring experience. While it isn't quite in the same class as, say, Monkey Island or Day Of The Tentacle, it's not that far off the mark. And with many more Discworld games in the pipeline, Psygnosis has got plenty of time to get things right.

DISCWORLD^{CD}

PSYGNOSIS/TEENY WEENY GAMES

(0151) 709 5755

£49.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

20MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, CD-ROM drive and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Pro Audio Spectrum, Gravis UltraSound, Covox SoundMaster, Aria and all major cards.

THE GOOD...

- Entertainingly off-beat plot and a cast of amusingly weird characters.
- Lots of challenging but not too obscure puzzles to solve.
- It's based on Terry Pratchett's Discworld novels!

...AND THE BAD

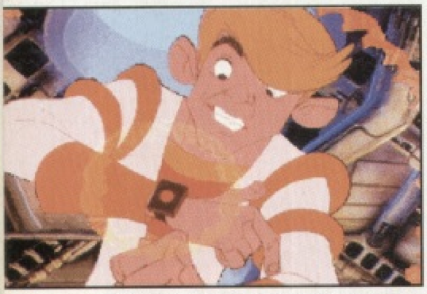
- It's based on Terry Pratchett's Discworld novels!
- The over-elaborate comedy set-pieces can get in the way of the action.

Overall

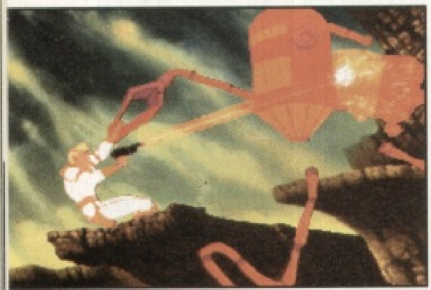
86%

Space Ace CD

ReadySoft is back! But poor David Upchurch is none too pleased to hear the news...



(Above) Dexter gets the call to energise. Look out, baddies — here comes Space Ace! (Below) "Eat laser death, robo-meany!"



Oh my god, here we go again... Way back in Issue 2 I had the (ahem) 'pleasure' of reviewing Dragon's Lair, ReadySoft's cartoon-ish arcade adventure based on the old laser disc coin-op. It looked great and it sounded wonderful — but it played like a physically-impaired brick. And now, for my sins, I've got to review Space Ace, the pseudo-sequel. *Psshaw!* — and you thought this job was easy...

Whereas Dragon's Lair centred around the sword-'n'-sorcery adventures of Dirk the Daring as he explored Singe the Dragon's castle, Space Ace is more of a space odyssey, in which the geeky hero Dexter has to rescue the curvaceous Kimberley from the clutches of intergalactic villain Borf. Oh, and he's got to destroy Borf's dreaded Infanto Ray as well, thus preventing the Earth's population from being turned into gurgling babies.

Plots aside, the two games are very similar. Once again the player has to guide the hero through the game's many lovingly-created cartoon scenes using a combination of cursor keys to move and space bar to fire a laser pistol. However, as all these scenes are pre-generated animations pulled off CD, there's no real freedom: try to go left when the game expects you to go right and you'll die — it's as simple as that.

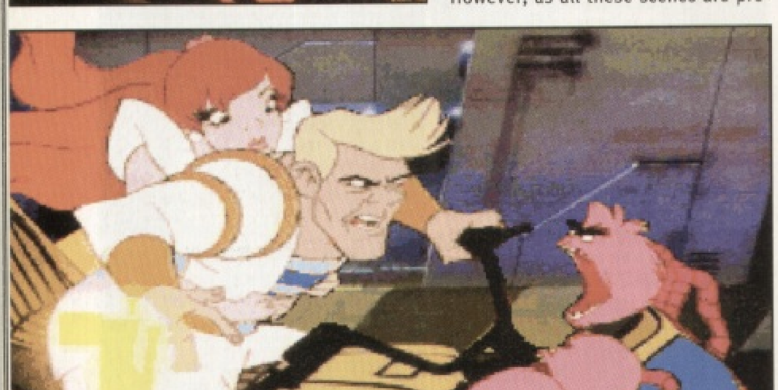
Since you're supplied with an infinite number of 'Continues', successfully completing the game involves very little real skill. If you get stuck you simply replay the game to the point where you died and then try out a different move. If you're successful, the game continues. If not, it's no problem — you simply try again until you eventually find the key press that works.

But while this infinite supply of 'Continues' ruins the game's longevity, it's probably just as well that they're available as otherwise Space Ace would be a very frustrating experience — all too often the game's events happen so quickly that you have next to no time to comprehend what's going on and to react before you're killed.

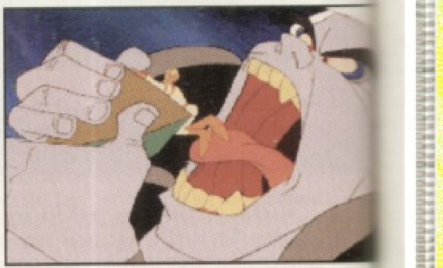
And, er, that's it really. Well, almost. You see, every so often you get the option to 'energise' and metamorphoses from the nerdy, pre-pubescent Dexter into the muscle-bound, steroid-soaked Space Ace. When this happens the plot 'branches off' for a few moments as Ace goes through his superheroic paces.

Eventually, however, the effects of the energise wear off, at which point Ace becomes Dexter again and the 'normal' plot resumes. Quite what the point of all this is I don't know — you can generally ignore the call to energise with total impunity — but it's a laugh if nothing else.

And, er, that really *is* it this time. With companies like Access and Origin showing us the heights to which so-called 'interactive movies' can aspire to when done competently, it's amazing that anybody still thinks something as limited as Space Ace is worth releasing. Perhaps with its forthcoming 'home-grown' game Brain Dead 13, ReadySoft will finally put some substance behind that impressive audio-visual gloss. Let's hope so, eh? Personally, I don't think I can face reviewing another game like Space Ace...



"Excuse me, little pink Tribble-like things, can you show me and Kimberley the way to the gameplay? No? Oh well, I'll just keep looking..."



(Above) Ace gets invited to dinner by his evil Dark Side — and he's on the menu!

SPACE ACE^{CD}

READYSOFT/IN-HOUSE

(001-905) 475 4801

$59.95 OUT NOW (IMPORT)

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster soundcard.

THE GOOD...

- As you'd expect, Space Ace is very pretty.
- The ability to 'energise' every now and then is fun.

...AND THE BAD

- A totally 'Gameplay Free' zone.

Overall

26%

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Big Red Adventure

Playing humourous adventure games is often like having a whole barrel of beer to yourself. It's great for the first few nights, but then the whole thing goes a bit flat and it starts leaving a nasty taste in your mouth. In this respect, Core Design's Big Red Adventure (or BRA as it's affectionately known in the PC GAMES office) is no different to the rest.

BRA is set in the new look, scrubbed-clean-of-Communism, no-holds-barred-embrace of Western culture Russia, where an unlikely trio of characters has assembled, austensibly to steal one of the Tsar's priceless heirlooms. Don't worry, I'm not going to make lots of Russian jokes in this review, because you get them all (and then some) if you play the game.

You begin the game controlling Doug Nuts. He's the personification of all things geeky, an unenviable Mr Puniverse physique, floppy hair cut and, most importantly, three inch thick NHS glasses. Bizarrely, he's the brains of the three you'll meet, while Dino Fagoli, as fine a figure of a cartoon stereotype as you could ever wish to control, gets a pair of shoulders at least twice as wide as the rest of his body, a muscle shirt to expose the self-same shoulders, and a line of patter that has just enough 'um...'s and 'duh...'s to remind us of his improbable stupidity.

Which leaves Donna Fatale, who completes the stereotypical threesome with a dress so short that it should get her arrested, and so ridiculously tight that it's a wonder she ever squeezed her unfeasibly large breasts into it. Four inch stilettos and flaming red hair down to her non-existent backside complete the ensemble.

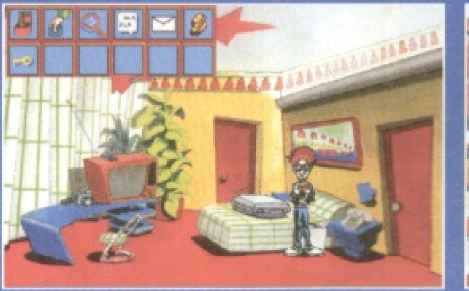
It's with these three characters, depicted in lovely SVGA animations, that you have to strut around a Capitalist Moscow, eating Great Bear Burgers and drinking Vodka Cola, all in a bid to uncover the fiendish plot (and let's be fair about it, which adventure is complete without at least one fiendish plot) by Russian army hardliners to bring back the good old days of bread rations and Siberian gulags. Yes, your original plans are thrown to the wind when you find out what's going on, and being good, curious Americans you just have to stick your noses in, all in the name of burying Communism once and for all.

With this crusading attitude you can charge around the beautifully depicted locations, listening to the excellent sound and speech, admiring the smug 'backward ex-Commie nation' humour. There are lots of cheap digs at the way American culture has corrupted the old Soviet Union, including a discrete nod to the creator of Tetris when you talk to a child with a Gameboy. It's all done in the best possible taste, cheeky to both East and West for their failures in Russia, without ever getting really political about it. The jovial cartoon atmosphere is what counts here, and there's plenty of it.

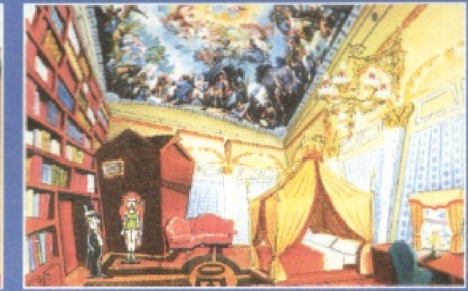
Dean Evans drinks vodka and likes potatoes, so we thought that he should tackle Core's newest offering.

The trouble is that the designers were clearly very conscious of the fact that they had decided to program a 'humourous' adventure, and at times the persistent one-liners start to grate enormously. The characters' comments when you examine items are appreciated every now and again if they're witty, but if they genuinely couldn't think of a good gag to go with the command 'examine perfume bottle' then it would have been better to leave it alone rather than try for a forced laugh. In the end, adventuring verges on the irritating more than amusing.

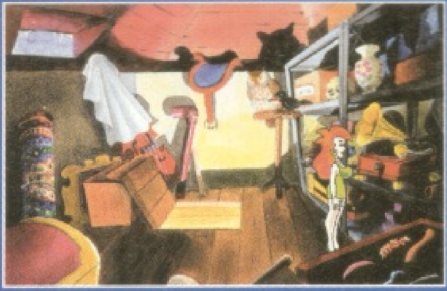
The control system is actually one of the nicer parts of the game, and goes a long way to show just how technically competent BRA is as an adventure. There is no interface on the screen, so the whole area can be used to draw the graphics. Hold down



This is where it all begins, in your tastelessly decorated hotel room. Personally I'd have prefered mirrors on the ceiling...



Now this is far more the kind of decor I like to see. As for that dress of Donna's, the less said the better...



Apart from being a totally gratuitous picture of Donna's profile, you can see the amount of detail in each SVGA location.

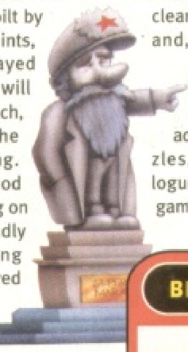
the right mouse button for the inventory screen to appear. Then run the mouse over an object and let go of the button to take the object. Finally click it on the object in the location to use it with that object. Easy, and elegant.

There are a couple of generic icons in the inventory too, such as pick up, open and talk to. Again, click them on an object to get the desired result (unless, obviously, you try talking to something daft like a lamp-post, in which case you'll simply get a sarcastic comment, and deservedly so). All in all, it's a system that would make the likes of LucasArts proud had they used it.

Talking to characters, of which there are about fifty in the whole game, is a case of using the 'talk to' icon on them and then picking a speech bubble out of a choice of up to three in response to what they have to say. Expect some heavy-duty double-entendres and silly word play along the way.

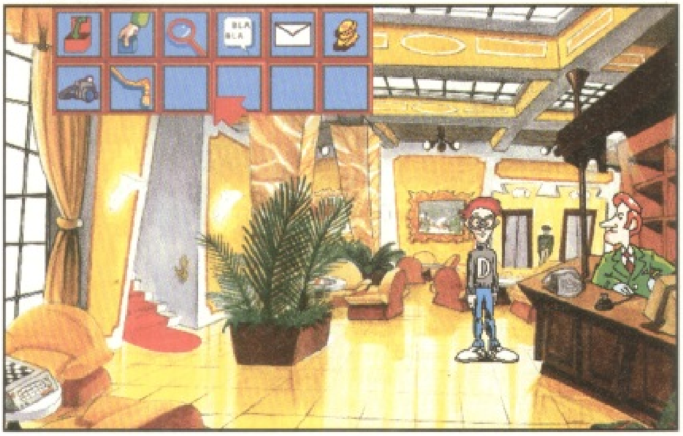
You may say that fifty characters doesn't sound like many, and I'd have to agree. Granted, the whole adventure feels well populated, and everybody you meet has something to say for themselves, but the fact is that there aren't that many locations in the first place — about a hundred in total. Admittedly most locations scroll left and right so they're bigger than a single screen, but it's still not a lot. For a game taking 12 disks and a whopping 60Mb of your hard disk (we're promised a CD-ROM version to take the strain off of our drives), it's surprisingly small. So, it's more of a medium-sized Red Adventure when it comes down to it.

The game itself is split into four parts, and there are less than a dozen puzzles in each. Some are really very basic indeed, offering no real challenge at all. Others are spoilt by the clumsy use of 'subtle' hints, which anybody who's played an adventure in the past will not appreciate at all. As such, BRA falls down a bit in the quality of the adventuring. The humour isn't really good enough to keep you playing on to the next guffaw, and sadly the puzzles aren't strong enough to keep you involved in the mechanics of the game either.

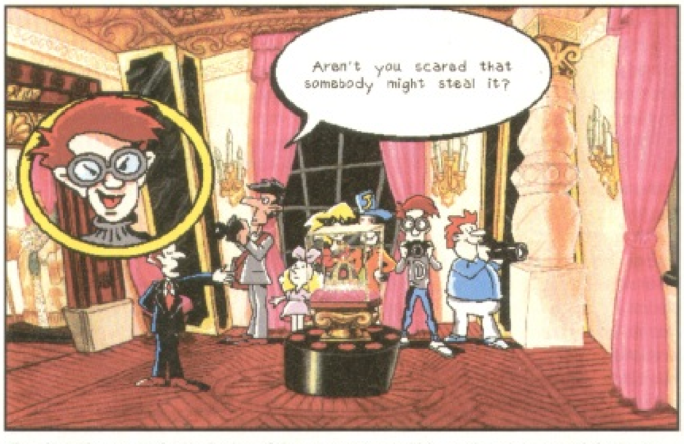


One of the things that I did like about the plotting and progress of the game was the way in which each part of the game can be solved in more than one way. If something doesn't work, then there's no need to worry. There are other ways to get round the major problems. For example, without giving too much away I can tell you that in the first section you need to go to a TV show where you can win a prize or get a runner's up gift. Either way, you can still go on to finish that section and save the day, albeit using different bits of lateral thinking later on in the game.

BRA is a bit of a pick and mix as far as computer adventures goes. You get some very nice parts, and then there are areas where the whole thing falls flat on its face, despite all the effort that has clearly gone into it. It's a nice effort and, if the designers iron out the rough edges, next time they could be on to a real winner. As for you, the discerning graphic adventurer, if you want tricky puzzles, good plotting and witty dialogue, there are other, better games around than this one.



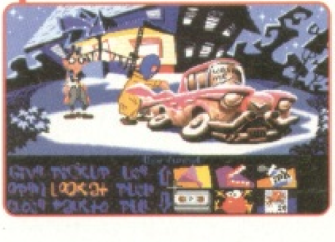
The control interface is small and unobtrusive and so, unlike Day Of The Tentacle's, it doesn't clutter up half the screen with the GET, LOOK and USE icons.



The plot? Ah, yes. At the beginning of the game Doug and his cronies plan to steal the Tsar's jewels, but as the game progresses, an evil plot is unearthed that involves the rebirth of Communism, long leather boots and world-wide military domination. Now that's more like it...

It's a bit like...

...Day Of The Tentacle. Although BRA lacks the polish of the LucasArts adventure, the two games have a similar graphical style and both allow you to control multiple characters. Day Of The Tentacle (DOTT) revolves around the geeky Bernard, the brain-fried Hoagie and the dippy Laverne as they travel between different time zones in time-travelling toilets. Weird, bizarre, but thoroughly brilliant.



BIG RED ADVENTURE

Core/Dynabyte

(01332) 297797

£39.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPEC

20MHz 386, SVGA, 2Mb of RAM, 60Mb of hard disk space and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- The graphics are really very nice.
- The sound's not bad, either.
- You never quite know where the plot will take you next.

...AND THE BAD

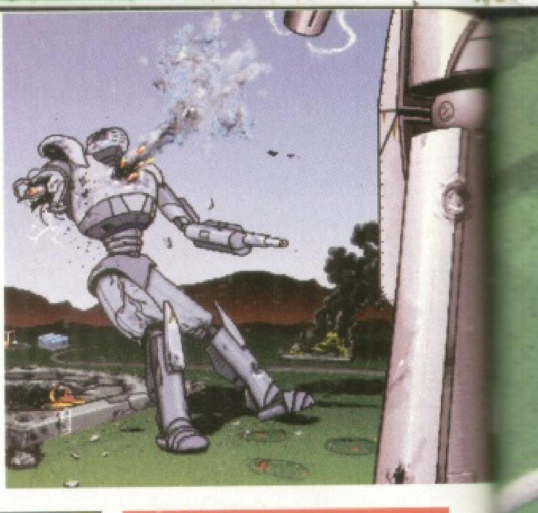
- The programmers' sense of humour gets *very* annoying after a while.
- Not-so-subtle hints throughout make it all too a bit too easy.
- It's actually not all that big after all.

Overall

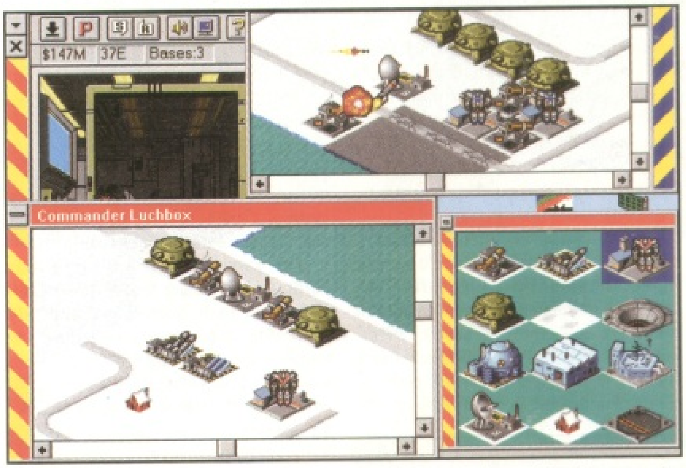
77%

PC GAMES STAR

Metal Marines



David Upchurch once had a Morris Marina, but there was more body filler than metal in it. Oh, *Marines*...



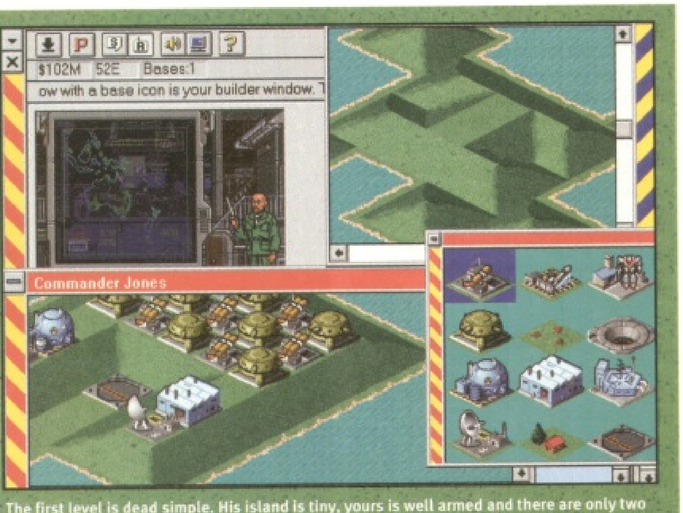
The various terrain types include grass, snow and desert. Not that the terrain makes any real difference to the gameplay, mind you...

Metal Marines and I have what you might call a love-hate relationship. I love it, I hate it, I swear at it and yet I can't get enough of it. It's one of the most addictive, compulsive, annoying, frustrating and thoroughly wonderful games I've played in ages. And now that I've totally confused you, I shall endeavour to explain myself...

Metal Marines is a bit like that old pen and paper game, Battleships. You have three bases, the enemy has three bases and you have to blow up his before he blows up yours. It's good. Extremely good, in fact. I know it doesn't sound a barrel of laughs or a complex strategic challenge, but believe me, this is one of those games which has you reaching for the ProPlus in the small hours of the morning.

The idea behind Metal Marines is to take on a series of computer opponents or, if you have 8Mb of RAM and a modem or serial cable, a human player, over various different levels. Your island is located in one window, the enemy's is in another, your statistics (cash available to you and the number of bases still standing) occupy a third window and the installations (missile launchers, interceptor missiles and so on — see the Mean Marines box out) appear in the fourth. All of these windows can be re-sized and moved around so the whole interface is fairly flexible.

When you start a game, you've got to place your bases on your island. Once that's done you can start building installations, upgrading the existing ones and attacking the other player. On the early, easy levels, your island comes ready-equipped with quite a few installations, and you may only have to build a couple of things to get you going. Later on, though, you'll find that you start with quite a bit less and the enemy, lucky fellow, has tonnes of high-spec military hardware to attack you with.



ow with a base icon is your builder window. T

The first level is dead simple. His island is tiny, yours is well armed and there are only two places where he could have hidden his base. All too easy...

There are two types of weapon in the game, missiles (self explanatory, really) and metal marines. Metal marines are like large transformer robots, and their job is to fly over to the enemy island and to take out as many installations as they can before they are destroyed. So let's say you want to attack using a missile or marine. You just click on the weapon of your choice and drag it on to the enemy island in the other window. Simple.

Until you make an attack, the enemy island appears blank and you soon discover that the weapons are useful, firstly (and obviously) because they blow things up, and secondly, because of their reconnaissance function. As soon as you launch a missile, you can see exactly what lies in the area it's been aimed at. This means that even if it is shot down by interceptor missiles, the position of the interceptor batteries is instantly revealed, so using your missiles and marines, you must try and reconnoitre the enemy turf and uncover the position of the bases.

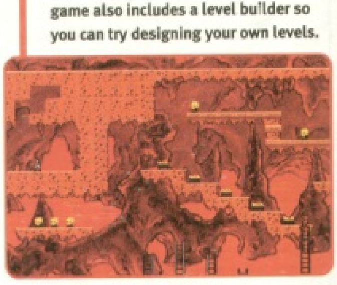
But whilst all this is going on, the enemy is trying to do the same to you and so, consequently, you need to spend as much money on defences as you do on weapons. Your main defences are interceptor launchers and gunpods: the launchers to shoot down missiles and the marines to get rid of trespassing enemy marines. Interceptors are not always accurate (accuracy is improved by the addition of a radar or two) but if you have enough of them you can even shoot down enemy marines while they're still airborne. If they do land (and they will, most of the time) the gun pods should be very effective. However, the gunpods aren't indestructible and so you shouldn't rely on them too much.

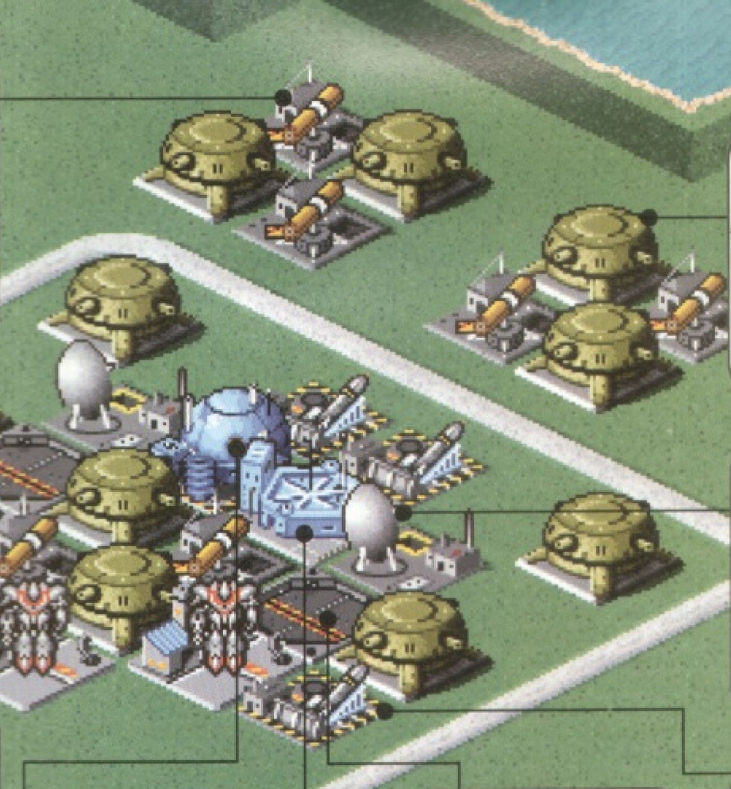
The metal marines are the second option. Not only can they attack, but they'll also spring into action if enemy marines venture onto your territory. Consequently, it's often better to use these as your main line of defence and have the gunpods as a back-up. They won't protect against missiles.

That sounds simple enough, but there's another factor to take into consideration — money. Everything you build costs, so while you're busy fighting, defending and building, you also have to keep an eye on your bank balance. Your money supply does replenish itself very slowly, but installations are expensive to build and if you run out of cash, you have to waste valuable time waiting for funds to build up before you can build something new.

It's a bit like...

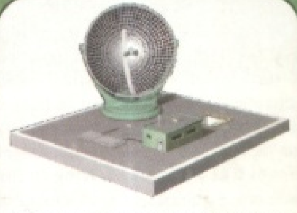
Actually, it's not a lot like anything, but if you're after an addictive Windows-based game you could try Loderunner from Sierra. The idea of this platform puzzle game is to collect the gold and avoid the evil monks — a simple enough idea but one that proves fiendishly addictive in practise. The game also includes a level builder so you can try designing your own levels.





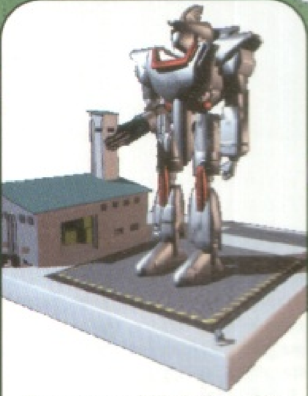
Missiles, like marines and interceptors, come in two strengths: single and double. A double missile is twice as likely to hit its target.

Gunpods are designed to destroy invading enemy marines. They are less useful against gold marines, though.



The radar improves the accuracy of your interceptor missiles, but is vulnerable to attack from enemy marines.

Interceptor missiles, er, intercept enemy missiles. Double interceptors are twice as likely to be successful.



Marines are useful for both attacking and defending. They come in two strengths: standard silver and extra tough gold.

Administration Headquarters. This is fairly expensive to build but helps you build up cash quicker than you would do otherwise.

Your base. Actually, you get three of these on most levels, and your aim is to keep them safe.

Factories reduce the amount of time it takes to build other installations on your island.

Missiles can't be launched unless they're fuelled. Building an energy plant cuts down refuelling time.

You can make your base look like an innocent little house to stop the baddies noticing it.

You shouldn't have to worry about money too much on the early levels, but later on you won't have a lot to spend and you frequently have to choose between offensive and defensive weapons. This may not sound too bad, but the enemy has a frustrating tendency to wipe out all your installations, leaving you unable to attack or defend. It's precisely this that makes the game challenging: if it was too easy, it wouldn't be any fun.

Of course, your ultimate goal is to wipe out the enemy's bases and when you achieve this, you move on to a harder level. I'm not sure exactly how many levels there are, because I've been playing this solidly for a fortnight and I haven't reached the end yet. What I do know is that some of the levels are almost impossible, but because the game is so addictive you just have to keep playing it over and over again until you've beaten it.

This is why I say I have a love-hate relationship with the game. I may curse it to hell, but I just can't leave it alone. The beauty of Metal Marines is its simplicity. You can pick it up almost instantly without even reading a manual, but it offers a real long-term challenge. And while it gets harder as you go along, the rate of progression is sufficient to keep you interested.

In short, Metal Marines is brilliant. It may not look that impressive, but it has real gameplay — a rare commodity in the age of fancy multimedia doo-dahs and not-very-interactive interactive movies. This is a game that harks back to the days when games were simple but fun. A little gem.

METAL MARINES

MINDSCAPE/IN-HOUSE

(01444) 246333

£34.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 486, SVGA, 4Mb RAM, 12Mb of hard disk space, Windows 3.1, mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster and Roland soundcards.

THE GOOD...

- More addictive than chocolate.
- Extrremely simple to grasp yet very challenging to play.
- Lots and lots of levels.

...AND THE BAD

- You'll lose your sleep, your friends, your social life...

Overall

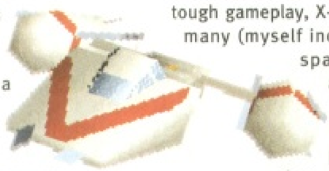
90%

cd updates

Revamped, reworked, repackaged and resold. Dean Evans takes a look at the latest crop of games that have had the ol' multimedia rub-down.

X-Wing Collector's CD

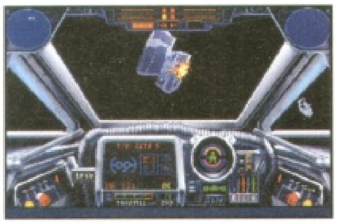
Ask any avid gamesplayer to name a PC gaming classic and, in amongst the cries of "Syndicate!" and "Civilization!", you're bound to hear a chant of "X-Wing! X-Wing!" from a crowd of plastic lightsabre-wielding Jedi Knight wannabes at the back. X-Wing is *the* classic space combat game. Although it can't match the awesome SVGA visuals of the most recent Wing Commander spectacular, it arguably has more gameplay crammed into it than Wings 1, 2 and 3 put together — and you don't have to fork out £1500 for a monster Pentium before you can start playing it.

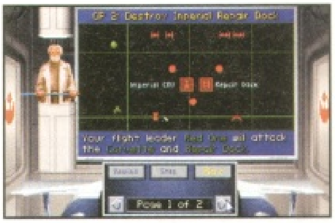


X-Wing's success owes much to the enduring nature of the Star Wars legend. Hands up how many people don't know the story of Luke Skywalker and his fight against the Empire? Step forward if you've never heard of the 'Force'? Star Wars, The Empire Strikes Back and Return Of The Jedi are massively popular, and the films have spawned lunch-boxes, duvets, action figures, pyjamas, R2-D2 soap-on-a-ropes, Han Solo shoes with glow-in-the-dark soles, mugs, hats and — of course — the obligatory clutch of computer and video games.

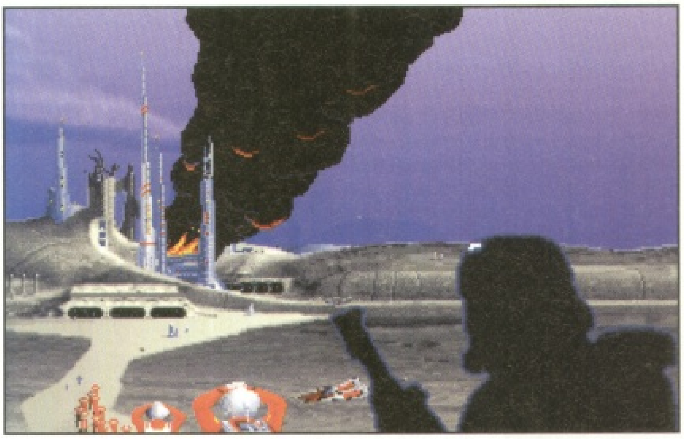
Using polygon graphics, sound effects digitised from the movies and an interactive soundtrack, X-Wing lets you join the Rebel Alliance as a starfighter pilot and to take on the Empire's TIE Fighters in a series of increasingly difficult missions that culminate in the do-or-die attack on the Death Star itself. With fast and frantic space combat, complicated mission objectives and some very tough gameplay, X-Wing is regarded by many (myself included) as the best space combat sim around. Although some might argue that it's been surpassed in the last few months by the Gouraud-shaded excellence of its sequel TIE Fighter, if you've ever secretly dreamed of flying a snub-nosed fighter against one of those triangle-shaped Star Destroyers, then X-Wing is still well worth a look.

And this is especially true now with the release of the X-Wing Collector's CD, a package that contains a revamped version of the original X-Wing game plus the two expansion disks, digitised mission briefings and six brand new missions. The game itself has remained basically unchanged but, as you can see here, the big difference is that LucasArts has jacked up the original's crude polygon graphics to TIE Fighter standards, and so all of the X-, Y-, B- and A-Wings, not too mention all the Imperial spacecraft, are now beautifully Gouraud-shaded. The sound has also been digitally remastered and so the effects are sharper and the music is much crisper and clearer than ever before.





Your flight leader Red One will attack the Corvette and Repair Dock



As well as the enhanced X-Wing game, the Collector's CD also includes both the Imperial Pursuit and the B-Wing data disks, giving you five huge Tours Of Duty to play in total. LucasArts has also included a handy Top Ace pilot, which allows you to fly any of the missions and view any of the cinematic cutscenes in any order you choose. So, if you fancy skimming along the surface of the Death Star or piloting the Rebellion's new B-Wing bomber, you don't have to battle through twenty scene-setting missions before you get to the really good ones.

Another major change is the addition of full digitised speech to the mission briefings — there are approximately 1,000 lines of recorded dialogue in the game. Finally, and no doubt with new players in mind, LucasArts has also included a new Easy mode which makes some of those ultra-hard missions slightly easier to finish. Of course, you can still play X-Wing on the default difficulty setting, but if you're being overwhelmed by the TIEs and Assault Gunboats, tweaking the difficulty down a notch may just avoid the inevitable frustration that you feel when, no matter how hard you blast, you just can't beat a particular mission.

Without a doubt the X-Wing Collector's CD is a lovely package, although if you already own the original you probably won't want to fork out another £45 for some Gouraud shading and a bit of speech. But if you haven't played X-Wing before, the revamped game is every bit as good, if not slightly better, than TIE Fighter.

But it's not all good news. Sadly, some of the loading times between the sections are a bit long, but obviously if you have a fast CD-ROM drive plugged into a fast PC, this doesn't really pose much of a problem. Also the cutscene graphics have dated very badly, especially when compared to those in TIE Fighter and the stunningly good Dark Forces, but the combat is the same, challenging and absorbing experience that it always was.

All in all, X-Wing is still way ahead of anything Origin has to offer in the Wing Commander series. If you're a Star Wars fan (and let's face it, who isn't?), you'll love it.

VIRGIN/LUCASARTS

(0181) 960 2255

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM, 1Mb of hard disk space and CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib, Pro Audio Spectrum, General MIDI and Roland soundcards.

Overall 87%

EarthSiege^CD

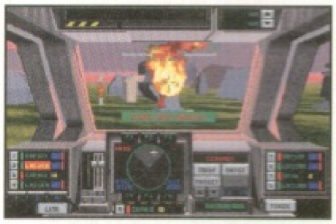
To be honest, there's actually very little difference between the disk version of Sierra's EarthSiege and the all-singing, all-dancing CD-ROM version of the game. In fact, it's not so much 'all-singing' as more of a 'quick warble'. As for the 'all-dancing' part, think of your granny trying to 'get down' to 2-Unlimited at a wedding reception...

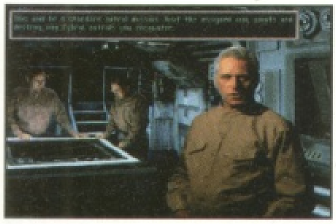
No, if you haven't got a CD-ROM drive, there's nothing even remotely spectacular about the multimedia version of EarthSiege. The bulk of the game is exactly the same, i.e. you stomp around in a variety of skyscraper-sized robots (HERCS), blasting Cybrid enemies, bases and aircraft. You can choose the Instant Action or the Single Mission option (fairly self explanatory, I think) or you can slip into your Cybertrunks and dive in at the deep end with the lengthy campaign option.

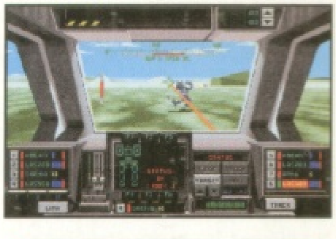
Again, the robots are gorgeously animated and all of the objects in the game are fully Gouraud-shaded and texture-mapped. If you didn't catch the review in the last issue, EarthSiege is an extremely atmospheric game and although the gameplay is very reminiscent of a tank simulation, EarthSiege is still one of the more refreshing combat sims I've seen in the past six months.

As for the new bits, there's not really much to speak of. The intro sequence is now one seamless animation, rather than the slideshow of pretty pictures that appeared in the disk version, while the only other notable difference is the fact that the mission briefings and the wingman chatter now have full digitised speech to accompany the text. And that's it really. EarthSiege just serves up the usual multimedia baggage, and as far as I can see there's no massive difference between the two versions at all.

But despite the lack of CD innovations, EarthSiege CD is still a very good game and although it doesn't boast a multi-player link (Battledrome should more than make up for that) or an extra campaign (look out for the inevitable expansion disk and then EarthSiege 2 later this year), if you're looking for a combat sim that's a little different, with huge death-machines that pack a lethal array of futuristic weaponry, then look no further than this. Yes, the gameplay does get a little dull and repetitive after a while, but the animation is nice, the graphics are dazzling and there's enough action on offer to keep you playing for a couple of months.







SIERRA/DYNAMIX

(01734) 303322

£44.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 4Mb of hard disk space, CD-ROM drive and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Thrustmaster WCS, FCS and Rudder Pedals; Sound Blaster, General MIDI and Pro Audio Spectrum soundcards.

Overall 85%

1942: Pacific Air War Scenario Disk

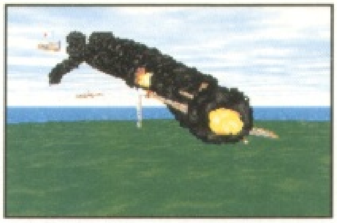
If 1942: Pacific Air War had a gang, I'd be in it. It's probably the best and the most authentic WW2 flight sim that I've played. It takes the words 'comprehensive' and 'detailed' and shoves them in your face before you have a chance to duck out of the way. Yes, it's that good — and with the arrival of this scenario disk, it's even better.

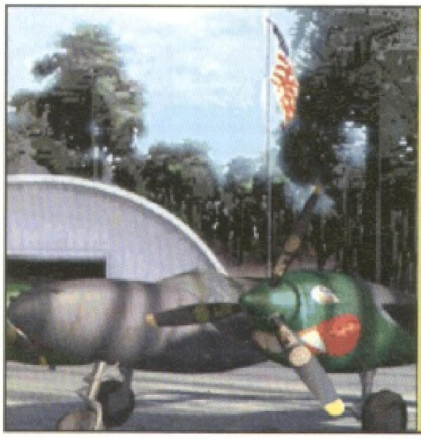
The scenario disk is actually a stop-gap product before the release of 1942: Pacific Air War Gold, the CD-ROM edition of the game that boasts all our old multimedia friends such as Full-Motion Video, tutorials, photographs, digitised speech, etc. Obviously, PAW Gold will include this scenario disk as well, which introduces six new planes, 300 new missions, two new campaign theatres and, most importantly, a multi-player communications options.

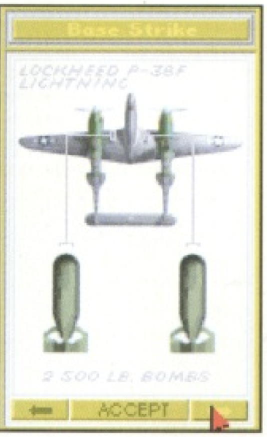
A modem link-up was the only thing that the original game lacked, and while the scenario disk doesn't let you take part in multi-player carrier battles (shame), it does let you fly the missions either cooperatively or head-to-head. In case you were wondering, MicroProse hasn't included a multi-player carrier battle option because without a time speed-up facility and access to the map in multi-player play, coordinating strikes and CAPs would be a nightmare. The Pacific War lasted over three years and, as the game runs in real-time, you could have played for four weeks before you even found the Japanese fleet. Realistic? Yes. Fun? I don't think so.

You can play the multi-player missions over a modem or via a serial cable and, like Doom, there is a 'chat' facility so you can discuss tactics or hurl abuse at the other player. The scenario disk also introduces six new army planes: the Japanese George, Tony and Frank, and the American P-38 Lightning, P-40 Warhawk and the P-51 Mustang. If that isn't enough, the disk also adds digitised speech to the game too, so you can listen to the pilots shouting "I can't shake him" and "I'm hit!".

With the addition of the scenario disk, 1942: Pacific Air War is now the game it should originally have been. It's massively atmospheric (now even more so with the digitised speech), and if you've yet to sample the Pacific War MicroProse-style then hang around for 1942: Pacific Air War Gold, which looks absolutely stunning (see page 23). With the addition of this disk, MicroProse has finally got PAW absolutely right. It adds a wealth of new features and it's nice and cheap to boot. Great stuff.







MICROPROSE/IN-HOUSE

(01454) 326532

£19.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

33MHz 486, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 5Mb of hard disk space, mouse and 1942: Pacific Air War.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster, Pro Audio Spectrum and Roland soundcards.

Overall 93%

Budget Reviews

Down in the archives of software history, from the sacred Pit of Games Long Since Forgotten (cue spooky music...), ***yet more old-timers are dusted off and put on show for their all-new budget release...***

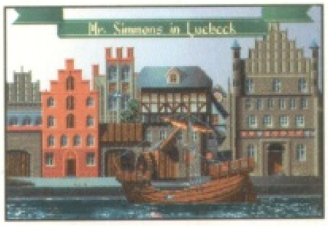
The Patrician^{CD}

The Patrician is a seafaring trading game set ye olde Europe. It's a cutthroat life of back-stabbing and mutiny, in which plucky sea-dogs must bargain, bribe and fight they way to the top. Sounds interesting, yeah? Well, er, no. What could have been a wonderfully absorbing nautical epic actually turns out to be a tedious, unexciting waste of both time and the CD medium.

Bergen
Tönsberg
Malmö
Rostock
Lübeck
Hamburg
Bremen
Minden
Brügge
dl Simmons

The game can be played in either quick or full mode, the latter being a more in-depth beast best left for gamers with no friends and lots of spare time on their hands. Opting for the quick game awards you with a cash lump-sum to buy a ship and crew, as well as cargo to sell later in the game.

Aside from trading across the treacherous seas, there's plenty to do on dry land — providing you have the cash. It's true, money *does* make the world go round, and without it you won't be able to construct new and bigger boats armed with cannons to fend off attacking pirates. Making money is fairly easy for the discerning trader, although the penny-less player can resort to the money-lender who'll give out cash but expects twice as much in return. Of course, you could marry into a wealthy family, but rich women don't usually go for hairy boatswains smelling of haddock.



Graphically The Patrician is far from inspiring, consisting of little more than a dozen fairly well-drawn static scenes and the odd animated sequence. The sound is particularly average too, with a (slightly) atmospheric sound-track occasionally interrupted by the squawk of a passing seagull.

And that's about all The Patrician has to offer. It's by no means the worst game ever, but there are so many other, more competent (and fulfilling) strategy games around.

length: 16 m
width: 8.8 m
crew: 8 man
load: 41 burden
speed: 6 kn
price: 12828 Taler

ASCON/TRIPTYCHON

(0171) 372 7435

£16.99 OUT NOW

MINIMUM SPEC

25MHz 386, VGA, 4Mb RAM, 6Mb of hard disk space, CD-ROM drive and mouse.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Sound Blaster soundcard.

Overall 57%

Arcade Pool/Overdrive^{CD}

For the time being, Team 17 are concentrating on their ever-reliable Amiga conversions until their work on PC-specific games nears completion towards the end of 1995. Until then the Wakefield-based developers have kept the PC-burner bubbling over by bundling two of their most popular games onto CD and packing in loads of new sound effects. What's more, they've slapped on a respectable £20 price tag. Good, eh?

The first title on the disc is Arcade Pool, which many will have already seen on disk. Well, this is the CD version which is essentially the same game, but with new sound effects and enhanced music.

Arcade Pool, unlike Archer Maclean's Pool, opts for a top down view of the table which works surprisingly well. The game is visually fairly simplistic and balls look 'chunky' and perhaps a little oversized, and they're either red and yellow or numbered spots and stripes depending on which game mode you choose to play.

The game features virtually every version of pool you could care to mention (9-ball, 8-ball, speed ball, etc.) and there's even the option to customise your own game, creating your own set of rules and altering the colour of the baize and so on.

Up to eight human or computer players can take part in a competition, the latter appearing in varying degrees of skill. The weakest computer player presents very little challenge, while the toughest opponent performs ridiculous four-ball plants to win the game with a single visit to the table.

While looking considerably more basic than Maclean's Pool, Team 17's title is thoroughly entertaining while the physics of the balls is virtually flawless. And it's cheap too — so what more do you want?

Overdrive, the other title appearing on the CD, is an overhead racer reminiscent of the ageing Amiga classic, Supercars, or even the more recent Power Drive from US Gold. Unlike Arcade Pool, Overdrive was never released on disk and therefore makes it's debut on this budget CD.

Overdrive is a fun driving game rather than a full-blown simulation, and as such you don't have to worry about braking, shifting through the gears and stopping in the pits — just slam your foot on the accelerator and don't stop for anyone! There are four vehicles to drive — a zippy formula one car; a rugged off-road buggy; a 4x4 truck; or a powerful sports-car — and each race is set on one of five courses — city streets; icy roads; a desert track; a Grand Prix circuit; or in the 4x4 arena.

Each race has an entry fee, the higher the fee the bigger the prize money awarded to the winner. As races are won, your bank balance increases steadily which allows you to bolt power-ups and a selection of other boosters to your car. Various bonuses are also found on the track, along with turbo pads and fuel top-ups which prove invaluable.

Again, Overdrive is an Amiga conversion which could put some people off this CD, but on the plus side, you do get two good games for a mere twenty quid. Okay, they may look simplistic but both are very playable, and all in all, the combination of Arcade Pool and Overdrive is a good, no-nonsense release worthy of consideration.

TEAM 17/IN-HOUSE

(01924) 267776

£19.99 OUT NOW

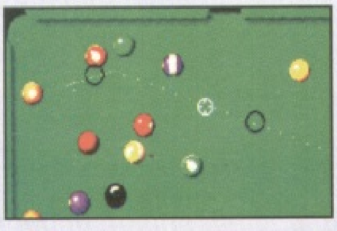
MINIMUM SPEC

20MHz 386, VGA, 2Mb RAM and CD-ROM drive.

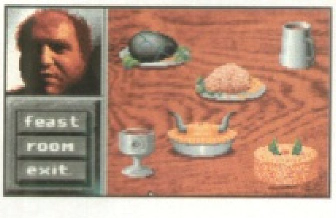
ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; mouse; Sound Blaster and Gravis UltraSound soundcards.

Overall 84%

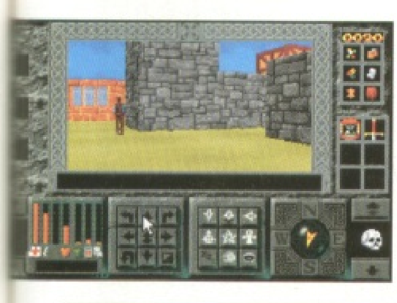


Legends Of Valour



Very much in the same vein as Ultima Underworld, Legends Of Valour is a first-person role-playing game which uses a slick 3D engine to swiftly shift through the pixillated town of Mitteldorf. And it's in this quaint village that the game unfolds — within minutes of talking to the locals, insults are hurled ("You smell like a dead Kobold's armpit!") and fights ensue. Yep, Mitteldorf is a hostile place, so you'd better buy a sword quickly!

Even though a bruised body is bad for the ego, fisticuffs is a perfect opportunity to practise those jabs needed to defeat the blood-hungry monsters which appear later in the game. It's an RPG, and you begin with little money and even fewer skills. Your abilities can be improved with practice while cash can be earned by running errands and by getting a job. You'll need a place to stay, which is expensive. Gambling is one solution, but trading weapons and other items from your inventory provides more lucrative results.



Getting on with the menial tasks of everyday life is all well and good, but it's not until you join one of Mitteldorf's guilds that the action really begins. Quests are issued by each guild and success rewards your character with more advanced skills (including magic and spells) until you ultimately progress through to the rank of Guildmaster. But what then? Just enter another guild and embark on another load of quests.

Put simply, Legends Of Valour is an excellent RPG, one which compares favourably to Origin's highly acclaimed Ultima Underworld.

Kixx/US Gold

(021) 625 3388

£12.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPEC

16MHz 386, VGA and 7Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Mouse; Sound Blaster, Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall 81%

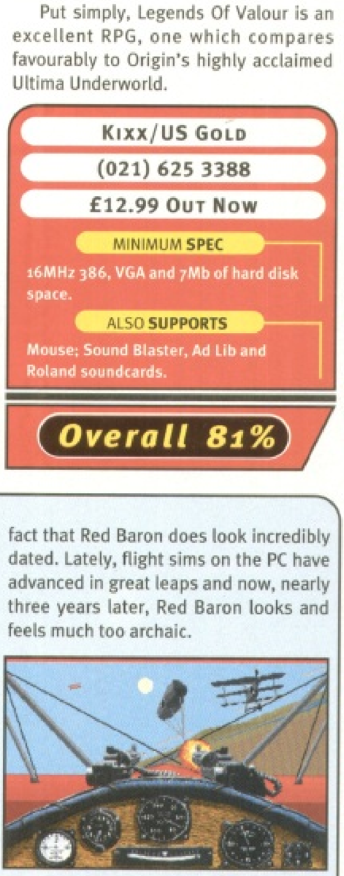
Red Baron

Red Baron is Dynamix's First World War aircraft simulator which, by today's standards, is frighteningly primitive when compared to Dawn Patrol or Wings Of Glory. In all honesty, Red Baron looks as ancient as the aircraft themselves.

Rather than including a full-blown campaign scenario, Red Baron is a series of short missions in which the pilot picks one of a selection of well-known WWI planes (Sopwith Pup, Albatross, etc.) to battle against a number of both German and British fighter aces, including Baron Von Richthofen, the infamous Red Baron.

Recreating the aerial dogfights over enemy lines, Red Baron was developed for the humble 286 and therefore moves like *lightning* on an average 486. Combat is fast, furious and, although it may not look as spectacular as Origin's title, it's still great fun screaming through the sky in little more than a wooden crate powered by a lawn-mower engine. What's more, you also get to attack Zeppelins and strafe ground targets.

However, it's difficult to ignore the fact that Red Baron does look incredibly dated. Lately, flight sims on the PC have advanced in great leaps and now, nearly three years later, Red Baron looks and feels much too archaic.



Kixx/Dynamix

(0121) 625 3388

£12.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPEC

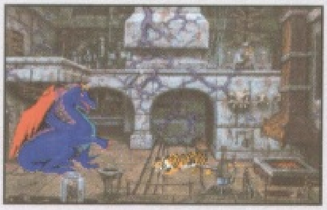
16MHz 286, VGA and 5Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; mouse; Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall 65%

King's Quest V



King's Quest V was (and still is, to some extent) breath-taking. Back in the mists of time when the humble 286 was the accepted industry standard, KQV was one of the most visually spectacular adventures around, featuring hand-drawn backdrops digitised in vibrant 256-colour VGA. It has also got one of the most sickening story-lines ever, with sarcastic owls, talking ants and loads of happy, *lovely* people. Eurgh!

King's Quest V was Sierra's first icon-driven adventure game, dispensing with the text-input interface found in the previous KQ titles. Now, instead of physically typing actions, you could simply select an action icon (walk, talk, use, etc.) from the menu bar and then click the cursor to execute the action.

It was also the first 256-colour adventure from the Sierra stable, featuring *gorgeous* hand-painted backdrops which were digitised into the game. In terms of presentation, King's Quest V stands proud against many of today's adventures, although it's not nearly as impressive as Sierra's new-style games, namely KQVII, which is packed with Disney-style cartoon characters which glide gracefully across the colourful scenery.

Even though King's Quest V is now nearly two-and-a-half years old (doesn't time fly?), it's still looks very nice indeed. True, the character sprites are small compared to the comparatively giant-sized Sam & Max, but then the two games are stylistically very different — as opposed to S&M's comic capers, KQV has the feel of a fairy tale, and therefore everything is, er, coated with sugar and spice and all things nice. Occasionally the game take this cutesy-wutesy loveliness a little too far, vomit-worthy is the word that springs to mind. Nothing should be this *nice*!

As you'd expect from a Sierra game, the virtually faultless presentation is tied off nicely with some good sound. However, the King's Quest games never were cosmetically lacking. In fact the only problem with KQV is the frustrating player control system, which sadly makes the game almost too annoying to play.

Around the same time as King's Quest V was released, Monkey Island appeared and sported a hilarious plot-line and an intelligent cursor system which highlighted any objects of importance. This made the game much simpler to play but didn't actually take anything away from the challenge element of the game. Sierra's control mechanism is far more primitive, and time is often wasted as the scenery is scoured for that one important object that you need to solve a puzzle. This pixel-hunting is frustrating, and makes KQV far less appealing than, say, Monkey Island or in fact Sierra's more recent titles.

Considering the plot behind the game is very much a children's fairy tale, you'd expect it to be aimed at the younger gamer. This is not the case, however, as the game is surprisingly tricky at times, not just because of the riddles but mainly due to the control system. Even at a budget price, King's Quest V's lavish facade doesn't manage to gloss over the glaring flaws in the gameplay and with Monkey Island 2 out on budget too, if you haven't played either, Guybrush and LeChuck win hands down.

Kixx XL/Sierra

(0121) 625 3388

£16.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPEC

16MHz 286, VGA and 10Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS

Joystick; mouse; Windows 3.1; Ad Lib and Roland soundcards.

Overall 71%

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Issue 4

Id Software finally unveiled Doom 2: Hell On Earth, and we were right there to witness the birth. In addition, System Shock reared its not-unattractive head, as did Colonization, Heimdall 2 and PGA Tour 486. There were great previews of Ecstatica, Retribution and Dark Forces and our disks were graced by the presence of Wacky Wheels and Transport Tycoon.

PCGAMES
2 HIGH DENSITY DISKS!
DOOM 2
Smashin' or cash-in?
WIN!
4
NO DISKS? ASK YOUR NEWSAGENT!
SYSTEM SHOCK
Origin's Cyberspace epic reviewed!
MY LIFE AS A VACTOR!

Issue 5

In our first CD issue, we took a long hard look at Magic Carpet, Little Big Adventure, Transport Tycoon and Aces Of The Deep. And, if that wasn't enough we previewed Loadstar, Cadillacs and Dinosaurs and DID's fab, new Chopper game called, er, Chopper. On the disk we had The Clue! and on the CD there was a cornucopia of demos including Retribution and Little Big Adventure.

PCGAMES
SPECIAL HD & CD ISSUE!
MAGIC CARPET
Bullfrog's latest stroke of pure genius reviewed!
5
NO DISK? ASK YOUR NEWSAGENT!
LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE
DID DO IT AGAIN!

Issue 6

In issue 6 we sank our teeth into Ecstatica, took to the skies with Dawn Patrol and US Navy Fighters and fumbled our way through Kyrandia 3: Malcom's Revenge. We also previewed every game that's coming your way in '95 and on the disks and the CD we featured Flight of the Amazon Queen, Novastorm, NASCAR Racing, Magic Carpet and Cyberwar. Woooo!

PCGAMES
Under a Killing Moon
The finished game reviewed inside!
6
Ecstatica
We sink our teeth into Psygnosis' stunning answer to Alone In The Dark!
CD-ROM EDITION!
It's a Winter Wonderland!
The Shape of Things to Come!
When is a PC not a PC?

Issue 7

You missed Issue 7? How could you? We had the first review of Origin's Wing Commander 3, featured the very weird Commander Blood and finally got to grips with Rise Of The Robots. We also took an exclusive peek at 3D-Ware, a brand new game creator, previewed Alone 3 and Dungeon Master 2 while on the disks we featured Bullfrog's Tube and 450Mb of the Making Of Wing 3!

PCGAMES
COMMANDER BLOOD
Er, wow! Like ker-razy, man...
7
WING COMMANDER 3
EXCLUSIVE! COMPLETE GAME!
The Kilrathi strike back in Origin's sci-fi smash!
NO CD? ASK YOUR NEWSAGENT!
Enter The Third Dimension!

Issue 8

Id Software proved that they are the blast-fest kings with Heretic, Doom in tights. Not only could you play the Heretic demo but we gave you the full review, plus cynical analysis of Alone 3, KA-50 Hokum and EarthSiege. We also peeked at UFO 2, Sim Isle and Frontier: First Encounters. And Disks? Or Disc? Well, we had Heretic, US Navy Fighters and Descent to keep you all happy...

PCGAMES
8
FIRST REVIEW!
HERETIC
Has Doom finally met its (death)match?
WINGS OF GLORY
Origin's WWI flight sim reviewed!
CES!
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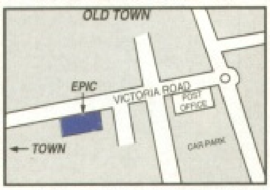

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power up

This month's Power-Up is crammed with in-depth guides to Interplay's futuristic Cyberia, Gremlin's toughie Retribution, System Shock (again) but to kick it all off, we tear apart...

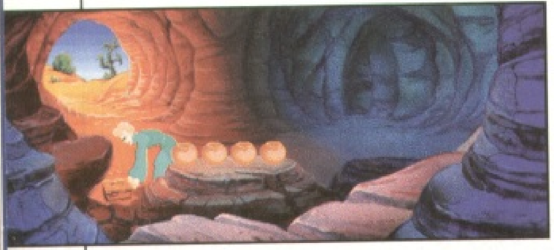
King's Quest VII is a tough cookie to crack so for all you bleary-eyed adventurers out there, we have prepared this invaluable step-by-step guide to Sierra's epic...

King's Quest VII

Chapter 1: "Where In The Blazes Am I?"

First off, grab the ripped petticoat from the cactus, then walk two screens south and pick up the hunting horn from the skeleton — you'll have to wait for the whirling dervish to move towards the bottom of the screen before you can collect it. Walk north and enter the cave. Take the basket and examine it, plucking the corn kernel from inside. Try picking up the jars — the first three will break, but the fourth will remain intact so stash it away.

Leave the cave and use the corn kernel on the sand under the dripping water. Wait for the plant to grow, then examine the gourd plant to the left of the corn stalk. Take a look at the weird drawing on the wall before picking the gourd seed from the now-open pod.



Walk east and knock on the small door under the sign which reads 'Rare Curiosities'. Talk to the kangaroo rat. Click the hunting horn on Valanice to blow the sand from inside and then use the horn twice on the left Jackalope burrow hole. Nab the patch of fur the little rascal leaves behind and pick up the glasses from the ground and, once again, knock on the small door. Give the specs to the rat, who'll give you a turquoise bead in return.

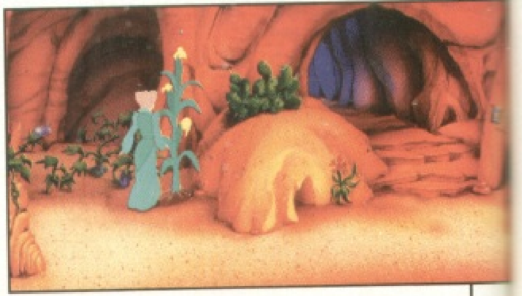
Walk two screens west, then head south. Take the stick and the salt crystals from the edge of the pool. Rotate the statue head by clicking on it, then examine the statue's collar and turn the blue beads so that they all line up on the third column. Twist the statue's wrist band and the pool will drain, allowing you to clamber down to the bottom. Take a closer look at the offering tray, then examine the empty part of the tray. Use the turquoise bead on the tray before taking the shaped brick that lies on the right. Now climb back out of the empty pool.

Walk east two screens, use the ripped petticoat on the stick to make a flag and enter the temple to the right. As soon as the scorpion appears, use the flag on the beast to pin it to the wall — take too long and Valanice will be torn to shreds. Examine the small statue on the right and turn the middle symbol on the front of the base. Place the blue bead in the right hand and the yellow one in the left, then drop the red bead on the pedestal to the right of the statue. You'll be rewarded with yet another turquoise piece, which should be used with the other part to create an odd arrow-shaped object.

Leave the building, then head west for two screens before walking north and using the stick on the cactus to get the prickly pear. Examine the lock above the doorway twice, then insert the turquoise shape to open the door. Step inside...

Vital Items Needed

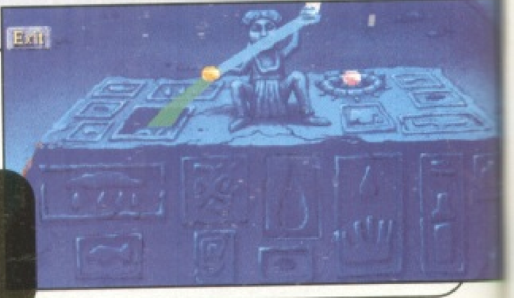
Golden Comb; Clay Pot; Stick; Basket; Hunting Horn; Jackalope Fur; Prickly Pear; and Salt Crystals.



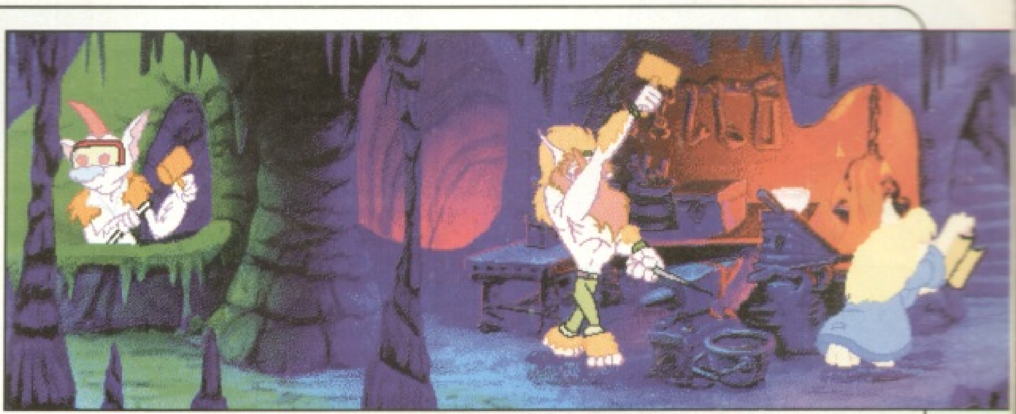
Alternatively...

There are other ways to finish the first chapter, so try the following: Pick a fresh ear of corn from the corn stalk, then fill the clay pot with salt water from the pool. 'Activate' the statue (twisting the head and collar as usual), then get Valanice to cry into the statue's bowl by using the golden comb on her. Pour the salt water into the statue's bowl before slipping the ear of corn into the statue's left hand. The water will change from salt to fresh water, which can be scooped up using the clay pot again.

Take this water to the wanderer and he'll give you one of two things — either a rope or some bug-reducing powder. The powder can be used to eliminate the scorpion rather than resorting to the flag trick, while the rope can be used to get the glasses from the Jackalope. Tie it between two cacti to trip him up, then grab the glasses while he's rolling around on the floor.



Chapter 2: "A Troll Is As A Troll Does"



Leave the room and take the toy rat left behind by the kid. Grab the shield from the top wall and walk into the kitchen via the top-right exit. After being kicked out and overhearing the witch's conversation, head back towards the kitchen and quickly use the toy rat on the cook. When the coast is clear, steal the bowl from the bottom-left shelf and use the machine on the right to get some baked beetles.

Walk back into the main hall and enter the mud pits to listen to the trolls talking about 'sleeping aids'. Exit the room and head for the workshop through the bottom-left exit. Take the tunnel to the lower level and pick up the lantern and fill the bowl with the green water by dipping the dish in the pool by the door. Walk to the edge of the chasm and feel the up-draft, then stroll down to the bottom ledge and leap across to the middle rock pillar. Jump across to the top-left ledge and scoop up some wet sulphur from the far wall, then leave the room by bounding back across the rock pillars.

Back in the workshop, wait for the troll to boost the hot coals using the bellows, then use the lantern on the raging fire. When the lantern has sparked, place it back in your inventory. Use the wet sulphur on the fire to knock out the nearby troll. While he's on the floor, grab the tongs from the tool rack and use them to pick up the brown box and douse it in the pail of water. After getting the silver spoon, replace the tongs on the rack and return to the grand hall.

Leave the room via the bottom-right exit and try crossing the bridge. A troll will leap out and block the path, so turn around and examine the cart to the left. Take a closer look at the shield from your inventory and remove the spike from the front. Slide the shield on the empty cart axle, then screw the spike back in place. Ride the cart across the bridge and enter the dragon cave to the right. Talk to the dragon before using the lantern on the beast to relight his fire.

You'll receive a gem as a reward, so take this back to the workshop and give it to the jeweller troll after talking to him. Gratefully accept the hammer and chisel that he offers and return to the dragon's lair. To get a dragon scale, hack away at the dragon's tail using the hammer and chisel when it flops to the ground, then nip back to the main hall.

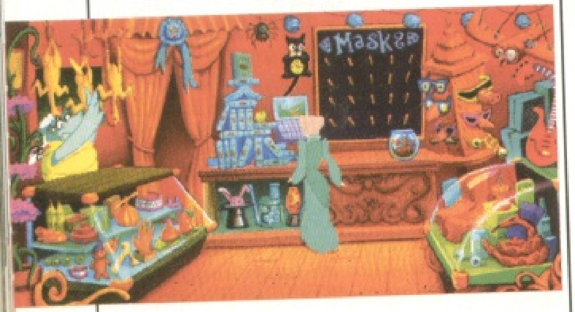
Give the bowl of green water, the silver spoon, the baked beetles and the dragon scale to the troll who'll then change you back into your human form. In the process you'll receive a silver pellet, but before long the evil witch will appear and teleport you back to your room.

Move the large bench across to the back wall, under the picture, then stack the seat and the foot stool on top to allow you to climb up into the passage behind the painting. Listen to the conversation, wait for Rosella to fall into the main hall and then grab the dragon toad. Walk back to your bedroom, listen to the argument and then use the dragon toad on Mathilde. In return she'll give you an enchanted rope. Try to leave the room using the bottom-right exit — Malicia will appear, so quickly use the toy rat on her. Exit bottom-right, use the enchanted rope on the elevator then ride the lift to the next chapter...

Vital Items Needed

Lantern; Hammer and Chisel; Dragon toad; and Silver Pellet.

Chapter 3: "The Sky Is Falling"



Take out the lizard beast with the prickly pear before leaving the cave and walking off to the west. Talk to the stag, continuing the conversation until he mentions Lord Feldspar. Head west then north, and cross the river bed by leaping across the stepping stones. Use the basket on the spider and examine the bird, then trek north-west and pass through the city walls by entering the small door.

Use the golden comb on the duke before entering the china shop. Talk to Fernando about treasure and walk off to the right. Pull the cover off the bird cage, open the cage door and grab the china bird.

Back at the china shop, use the bird on Fernando to get the china mask, then leave the shop and head off towards the town hall. Wear the mask and knock on the town hall door. Inside, leave the party via the curtained door at the back and walk right along the stairway, then down and continue to the door to the powder room, which can be opened by knocking twice. Examine the third mirror from the door to leave.

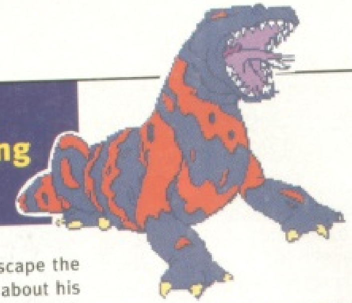
Open the desk drawer on the right and take the magic statuette, then leave the office and walk left to the main landing. Head south from the landing and back to the party. Leave the town hall and head east to the pond. Grab the wooden nickel from the mockingbird nest, use the salt crystals on Valanice and enter the Faux shop. Trade the china mask with Erastz to get the rubber chicken. Give the wooden nickel to Erastz in exchange for the book, then head back to the desert.

At the Rare Curiosities door, give the book to the kangaroo rat and take his crook. Return to the woods and examine the flowers on the left of the screen before gathering some honey using the clay pot. Walk back to Falderal and use the crook on the cheese to get the moon!

Vital Items Needed

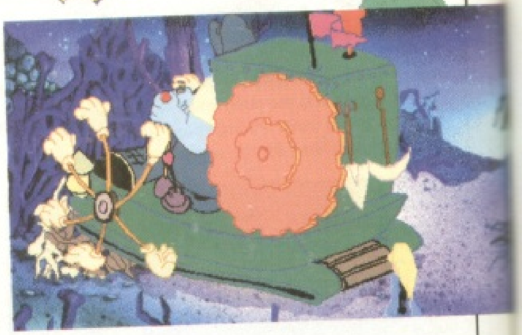
Golden Comb; Stick; Hunting Horn; Jackalope Fur; Nectar in Pot; Rubber Chicken; Magic Statuette; and the Moon.

Chapter 4: "Will The Real Troll King Please Stand Up?"



Grab the grave-digger's shovel to escape the crumbing rocks, then talk to the digger about his rat, Iggy. Walk off to the right and watch the kid. When he's gone, head back left and see what the other brat is doing. At the Jack-O'-Lantern house, climb up inside using the rope — don't climb the spider's web. Grab the backbone off the floor, take the foot-in-a-bag from the coffin and use the rope to exit the Hallowe'en house.

Walk left and enter Dr Cadaver's house after the kid has gone. Inside, use the backbone on Dr Cadaver and take the weird pet he offers in exchange. Head back to the Jack-O'-Lantern house and use the weird pet on the brats, then on the rope lift to rescue Iggy the rat. Give Iggy back to the grave-digger for which he'll hand over the valuable grave-digger's horn.



Back at the Jack-O'-Lantern, use the hammer and chisel to crack open the coffin and save the cat, who'll reward you with one of her lives. Walk to the graveyard and take the shovel, then go left and down two screens. Standing at the bottom of the screen and on the left, blow the horn to summon the grave-digger.

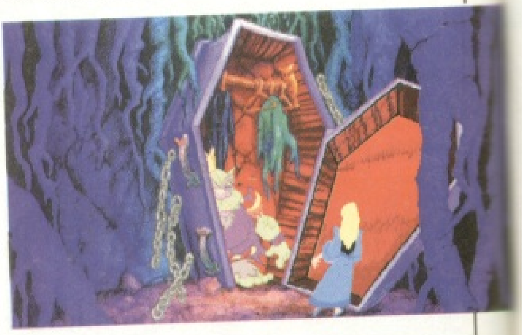
Climb down the hole he creates, then examine the lock on the coffin and open it by clicking on the skull, the bat and finally the spider. Use the dragon toad on the King and then the hammer and chisel on his wrist band. At the end of the animated cutscene you'll end up with a magic wand and the Troll King as a Scarab.

Outside, take the black cloak and wear it by clicking the robe on Rosella. Back at Cadaver's shack, talk to the doctor to get the defoliant. Walk east then south, scaring the brats as you pass. In the garden, quickly use the defoliant on the bush monster, then give the foot-in-a-bag to the Venus Fly Traps. While they're busy chomping on the leg, grab the red fragrant flower from the base of their stalk and head right.

Trek north, off behind Malicia's house, and yank the green vines to uncover a hole. Use the shovel to widen the hole and dive in. Nip back under the floorboards as quickly as possible, and when the dog sticks its nose through the knot-hole, squirt the beast with the defoliant. Climb back inside the room and examine the third draw in the chest until you find the mysterious device. Dump the clothes back in the drawer, grab the stocking and exit via the floor-board.

Pick up and wear the cape, walk back to the front of the house and head right. When confronted by the were-bear, use the woollen stocking with the silver pellet to create a sling, then use the sling on the bear. From the next screen, head north, cross the river bed and head off along the path through the trees.

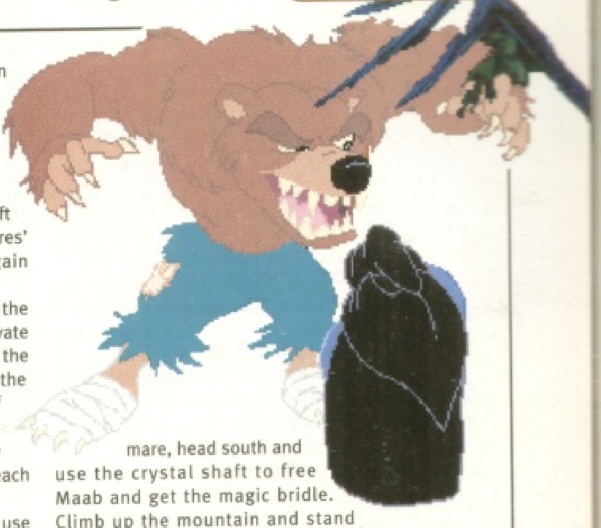
Enter the city through the small door and walk inside the town hall, leaving the party by exiting through the curtain at the rear. Negotiate the stair maze, enter the powder room by knocking on the door twice and then examine the plaque on the base of the small statue. Use the stocking to polish the plaque and read the message, then take a look at the golden grapes on the pillar on the right. Use the hammer and chisel to get a grape and use it on the statue to partially open the exit. From the left of the room, use the magic wand on the Troll King Scarab, place the wand back in your inventory and leave via the exit. Walk north-west...



Note: ***Whenever the Bogey-Man appears, walk off-screen immediately to avoid his crushing pounce. When you return, he'll have disappeared.***

Vital Items Needed

Lantern; Hammer and Chisel; Defoliant; Magic Wand; Shovel; Extra Life; Fragrant Flower; Woollen Stocking; and Mysterious Device.

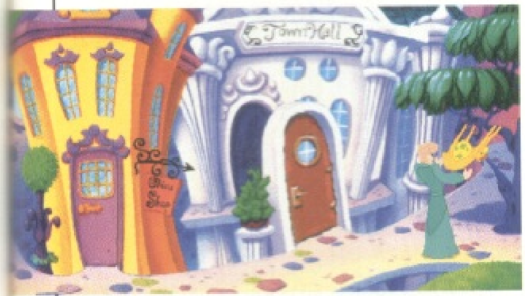


Chapter 5: "Nightmare In Etheria"

Tie the rubber chicken to the tree on the right, then use the moon on the chicken and catapult it into the air. Take the feather from the branch and head off right to the market. Exchange the Magic Statuette with the slimy salesman and get the were-beast salve in return. Leave the town.

Stroll off to the right for three screens and use the feather on the snoring rock. Listen to what he has to say, then walk west and cross the river bed. Walk south then east for two screens and use the nectar-filled pot on the statue. Head left, mix the Jackalope fur with the were-beast salve and use the two on Valanice to scoot past the were-bear.

Walk left through the garden, carefully avoiding the Venus Fly Traps, and leave through the gate at the top of the screen. Head off to the left, then return to the Jack-O'-Lantern and climb the rope to get inside. Grab the bone from the mummy, leave the house and walk two screens west before heading north. Give the dog a bone and talk to the mutt until you eventually get the horseman's medal. Leave the scene, head south and give the medal to the crying woman.

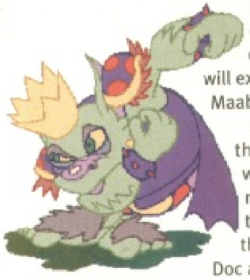


Two screens to the right, take the lit firecracker, carry it back to the previous scene and use it on the crypt door. Enter the crypt, take the dog statue and the horseman's head from the open casket and then leave. Stand on the path and use the head on the horseman as soon as he appears.

You'll be transported to Etheria and will end up with the horseman's fife. Walk right and climb the mountain. Clamber up the tree and edge out to the very end of the branch and examine the grapes to get Ambrosia. Slide down the tree and head south, then clamber to the bottom of the mountain and walk south, followed by west.

Use the bottom-right rainbow to warp back to the woods by the stream, then walk across the bridge and use Ambrosia on the cornucopia to get the pomegranate. Back across the rainbow, head left and use the pomegranate on the tree to break Ceres' curse, then use the horseman's fife to once again return to Etheria.

Walk east then north and pluck the strings on the harp in the following order: 1; 5; 6; 4. This will activate the harp, so use the globe to warp to Fates. Talk to the Fates who'll tell you about the Maab in the land of dreams. Continue the conversation and they will explain the only way to reach Maab is by sleeping.



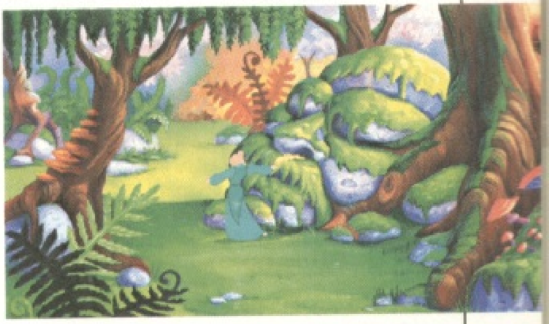
Head down the left and use the bottom-left rainbow to warp to Ooga-Booga. Walk north through the gate, then west before entering the house and talking to the Doc about insomnia. Step inside the coffin to sleep and, once again, use the fife to enter Etheria. Walk to the harp and use it to warp to Fates and again, talk to the Fates.

Walk south and then west, then use the bottom-right rainbow to warp to the woods and head left to talk to Ceres. Back to Etheria using the horseman's fife, use the bottom-left rainbow and walk right to Malicia's house. Walk north behind the house and, if the dog isn't barking, climb inside the hole. If the dog is barking, leave the screen and keep returning until the mangy mutt shuts up.

Inside, climb back under the floor-boards and try to re-enter the room. Malicia will leave the room with Cuddles — scramble inside and take a look at the lamp to get a crystal shaft. Leave the house via the floor-board and walk to the front of the house before re-entering Etheria with the fife.

Use the top-left rainbow to appear in the desert, and from here walk two screens north and then east. Enter the building and energise the statue using the crystal shaft. Outside, it's back to Etheria. Walk east then north, and consult the Fates once more to receive the Dream Catcher. Head south and east and climb down the mountain, then use the Dream Catcher on the cave entrance. Quickly use the Dream Catcher on the nightmare when it appears and step inside the cave to talk to the weaver of dreams.

Get the tapestry of dream by using the catcher on the weaver, then use the tapestry on Valanice to enter dreamland. Use the Dream Catcher on the black nightmare, head south and use the crystal shaft to free Maab and get the magic bridle. Climb up the mountain and stand behind the cave and before using the magic bridle on the white wind.



Vital Items Needed

Golden Comb; Stick; Clay Pot; Ambrosia; and Horseman's Fife.

Chapter 6: "Ready, Set... BOOM!"

Examine the magic wand closely and, by using the switch on the bottom of the shaft, change the setting to 'F'. Use the wand on the king's thrown to the back of the room. In the volcano, use the shovel on Rosella and walk north-west. To open the door, operate the left eye, followed by the right eye and finally the nose.

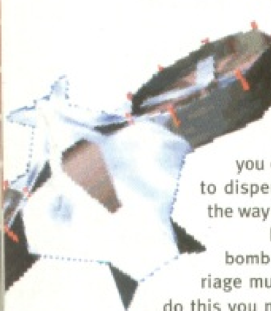
Charge the mysterious device using the socket on the right control panel (it'll pulsate when fully charged) and then grab it back. Wake the King using the fragrant flower, turn the evil Malicia into an infant using the mysterious device and save Edgar by giving him the extra life. Congratulations — you've just completed Sierra's King's Quest VII! Thank God for that.

Cyberia

Cyberia is more than a simple shoot-'em-up, and so the PC GAMES International Rescue team is on hand to steady your trigger-finger before the brain-strain blows your mind.

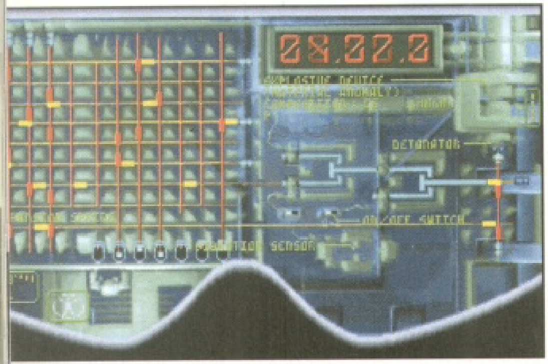
First Stop — The Rig

For a hotshot like Zak, The Rig should prove no problem whatsoever. Disarm your weapon when confronted by Gia and follow her into the gunning stations to fend off the attacking Cartel fighters.



You have two choices after the gunnery chair sequence — either kiss Gia and face the wrath of Santos or simply head straight for the hangar bay and ignore the pouting cutey by your side. It doesn't really matter which you choose, although if you do 'get it on' with Gia you'll have to dispense with a couple of guards on the way to the hangar.

Before you enter the ship, the bomb strapped to the ship's undercarriage must be disarmed. To successfully do this you must first initiate an MRI test by hitting the F2 key. Next press the vibration sensor button, then flick the switches in the following order (starting from the left): 4; 2; 7; 6; and then finally 5. *Note*: this is the solution for the hardest difficulty setting, although it will work on easy and medium.



In The Cockpit

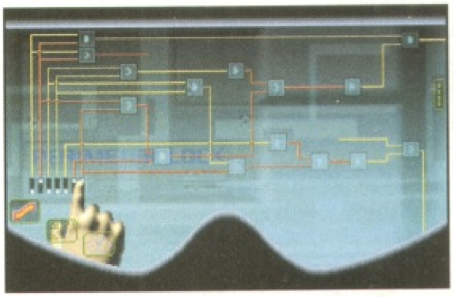
Controlling the weapons systems of the TF-22 is a relatively straightforward process and the only words of advice on offer are to follow each individual mission briefing carefully (taking note of primary targets and friendly forces, outlined in blue) and learn where the enemy attacks from. Remember, if at first you don't succeed, try, try again.

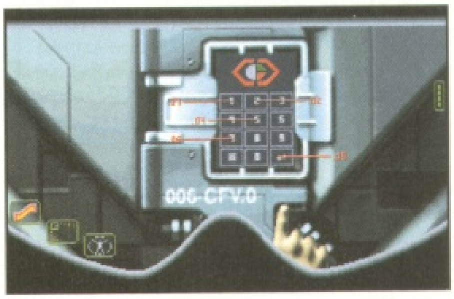
The Cyberia Complex

There are two ways to enter the complex, either by blasting your way past the guard (easy) or by entering through the ventilation shaft and leaping through the fan (slightly harder). The guard lurks on the path to the left of your Transfighter while the shaft can be found by walking to the right.

To open the perimeter gate and disarm the booby trap, the tricky circuit puzzle must be cracked by toggling the first switch on the left, then the sixth and finally the third.

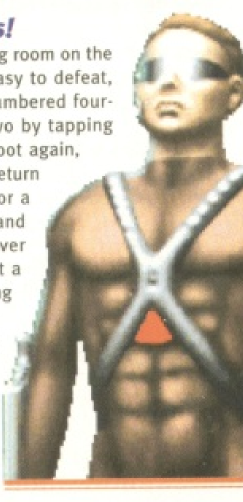
Inside the Cyberia complex, don't bother taking the elevator shaft to the lower level just yet. Instead, head along the hallways and up to the heavily-armoured security door. The door is operated by the key-pad, but obviously you don't have to correct code. To deacxtivate the booby-trapped lock, first use your visor to run an infra-red scan (press F1). The heat spots were left behind by the last person to enter the secret code, which is 2571. After choosing the combination, hit ENTER to open the door.





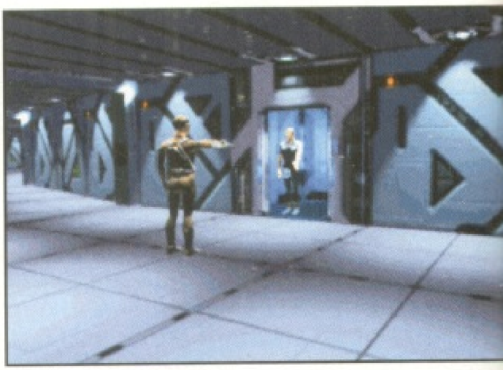
Guards! Guards!

The guards in the dining room on the right are actually quite easy to defeat, even though you're outnumbered four-to-one. Shoot the first two by tapping right, shoot, right and shoot again, quickly otherwise they'll return fire. With two left, wait for a lapse in their onslaught and duck out from behind cover and take them out one at a time, diving back into hiding if it gets too hectic.



Upon entering the conference room where there are two guards discussing the Cyberia project, wait for one of the troops to leave before edging up to the crates on your left. The seated guard will hear you approach, so duck behind the table and open fire. Wait for him to dive for cover, then step out from behind the crates and blast him when his head pops up.

In the computer room, access the nearest terminal which will ask you for a password. This is found by listening to voice mail which tells you to examine the picture on the wall in the sleeping quarters. The portrait is of Albert Einstein and 'Einstein' is the code which unlocks the system.

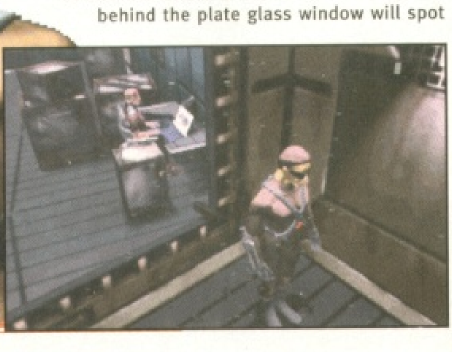


After you've sorted through the personnel files and located and noted the passcode, leave the room and a guard will spring from the elevator and throw a blast grenade. To survive, *quickly* turn on the spot and fire, so the grenade drops inside the elevator. Run across to the right elevator control panel and enter the code obtained from the computer so you can close the lift doors and avoid the blast.

Going down

The lower level of the Cyberia complex is accessed by shoving one of the crates in the storage bays so a hidden door is uncovered. Behind the door is a cargo lift which leads down.

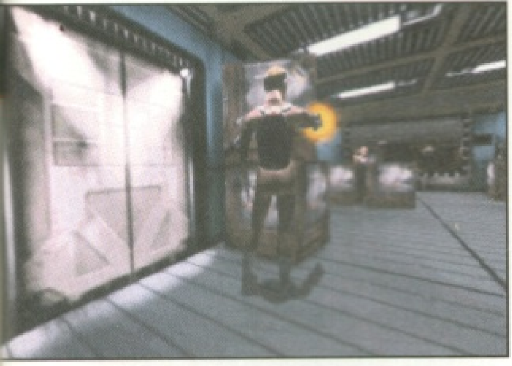
Open the door and enter the room but don't walk across the centre of the room — the guard behind the plate glass window will spot

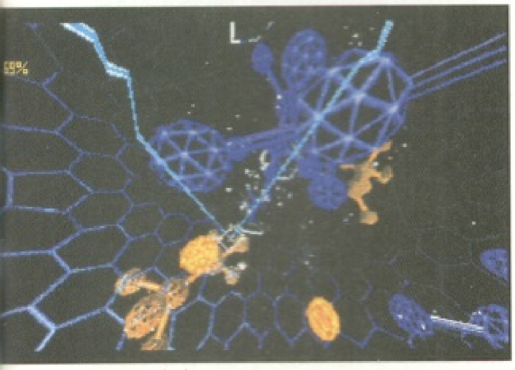


you and release toxic gas which leads to your untimely demise. Instead, shuffle around the edge of the room and run past the observation window, but only after the guard has turned away from his notebook and is facing the computer screen.

Before you head any further, duck inside the observation room and hide behind the crates to avoid the guard's laser blasts. In between his shots, open fire to take him out.

To progress any further you need the red key card, which can be found in the infirmary. However, the room has been sealed to contain an infectious virus so to grab the card you must first access the computer terminal in the infirmary control room. This allows you to open the vents, next to which the key card lies. With the vents open, walk back to the cargo elevator and push through the metal grating on the right which leads through to the ventilation shafts. Inside the tunnels, reach through the gap to grab the card.

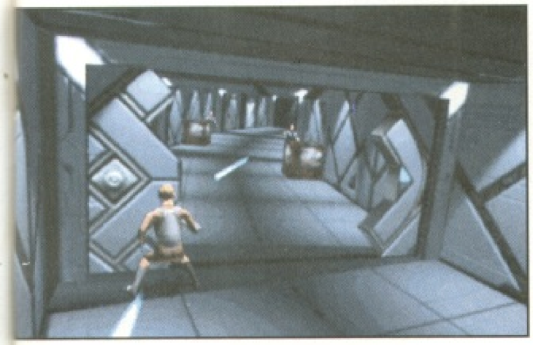


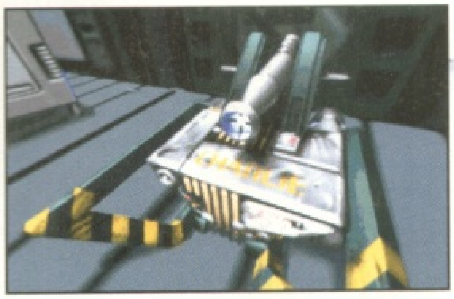


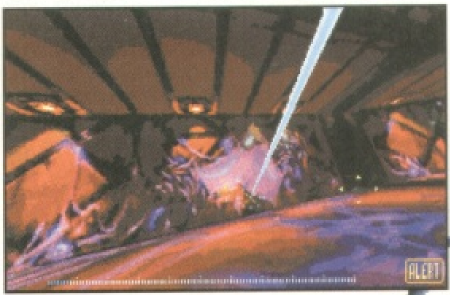
Ambush!

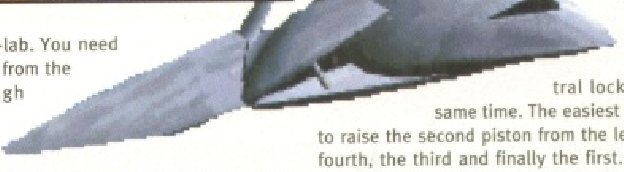
As soon as the security door on the lower level opens, two guards will unleash a hail of laser bolts in your direction. Dive off to the left to avoid their shots and then, when they duck down to reload, take them out one at a time. Easy, eh?

The red key card opens the nearby door which leads to the Cryo-lab. You need the virus antidote from the terminal, although the vaccine has been infected itself. To inoculate yourself, sit at the terminal and eliminate the virus by destroying the orange balls. On the easy level at least 50% of the virus cells must be destroyed, while a tougher 72% must be eliminated on medium difficulty and 80% of the virus cells must be wiped out on the hardest level. Having successfully created an antidote, make a note of the sample number (either 6, 7 or 8).





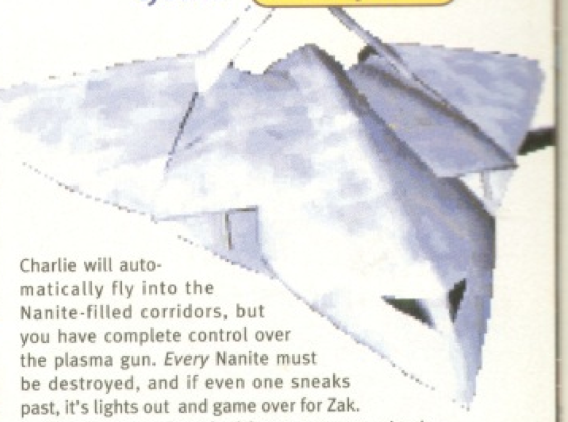




It doesn't take long for the virus to infect your blood stream, so quickly log on to the computer and enter the vaccine sample number. Next, enter the booth on the right to receive the antidote.

Charlie Don't Surf!

The path that lies between you and the Cyberia weapon is infested with mutated creatures known as Nanites. Natural born killers, the Nanites can only be destroyed using the remote unit, Charlie. After glancing down to examine to Charlie, hack into the nearby terminal and power the hov-unit up.



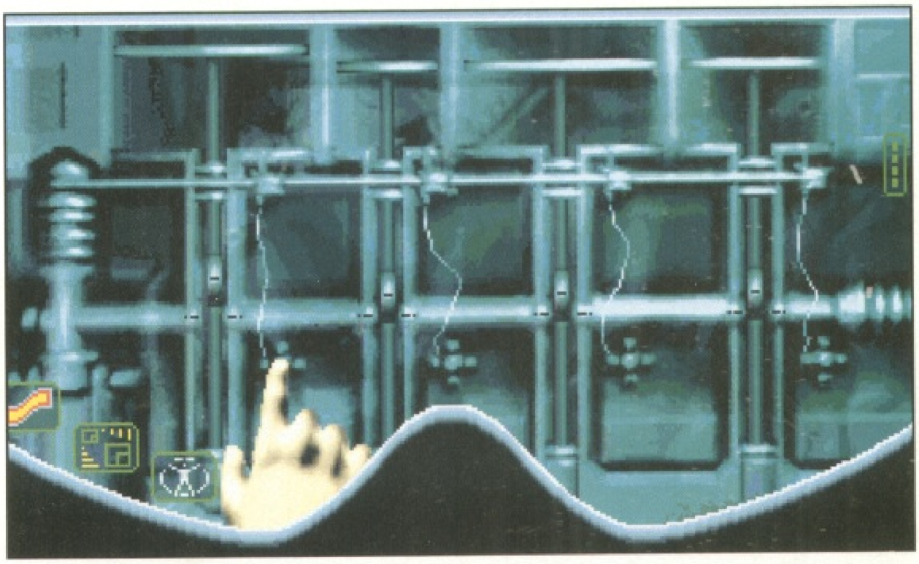
Charlie will automatically fly into the Nanite-filled corridors, but you have complete control over the plasma gun. *Every* Nanite must be destroyed, and if even one sneaks past, it's lights out and game over for Zak.

Charlie is equipped with an awesome shockwave device which, when activated, will destroy all Nanites in the immediate vicinity. This device is handy when one of the little buggers manages to slip past you, but keep in mind that the weapon saps away at Charlie's limited power supply so only use it in emergencies. To activate the elevator, you need to raise the pistons until all four drop into the central lock at roughly the same time. The easiest way to do this is to raise the second piston from the left first, then the fourth, the third and finally the first. If all goes well, you should be able to unlock the door easily within a couple of attempts.

The Big Bang

In Cyberia's grand finale, Zak merges with the advanced bio-mechanical Cyberia weapon and leaves the crumbling complex to wreak havoc on the back-stabbing Santos. This last shoot-'em-up sequence is perhaps the most challenging of them all, especially if you are playing on the medium or hardest difficulty level. Don't forget to practice and learn the attack patterns of the incoming fighters so you can aim-up before they've even appeared.

Having battled past the starfighters, you'll face Santos' battle station. Level your guns at the head of the huge robot-shaped space station and let rip with your laser cannons. Persevere and the battle station will explode, dragging Santos to hell with it. Congrats Zak, you finally did it...



You've battled against near-impossible odds and now you're finally ready to face Shodan in this, the final part of our full solution to Origin's RPG...

System *Shock*

You awoke from hibernation to find Citadel Station overrun by mutants and cyborgs, all under the control of a mad computer bent on destroying the world. You stopped Shodan firing the mining laser at Earth's cities. You thwarted her plans to infect the planet with a deadly virus. And you almost rescued the remaining crew survivors on the flight deck (but not quite — shame on you).

It's been a busy day.

Unfortunately it's not over yet, as Shodan is preparing to beam herself down into the Earth's computer networks. Looks like it's time to show that overgrown ZX81 who's boss by putting a stop to her plans and then disconnecting her once and for all. Who knows? You might even escape with your neural implant intact...

Semtex Warrior

With Beta grove out of the way, the Executive Level is harmless to the people of Earth, but the overall danger is far from over. Shodan has a contingency plan — to download herself into the planet's computers, and to take control by zipping round the information superhighway. Such a dastardly plot cannot be allowed to succeed, of course, and it's up to you to destroy the communications link between Citadel Station and Earth — in other words, the four antenna relays Shodan needs to download.

The bad news is that the relays are on the engineering deck (Level 7) and it's a real bitch. For starters, the four antennae are spread around the level in the most inaccessible places, and the central core that allows easy passage from one area to another has been locked up. Then there's the higher level of cyborg resistence here, including a couple of really nasty traps involving SEC-2 robots.

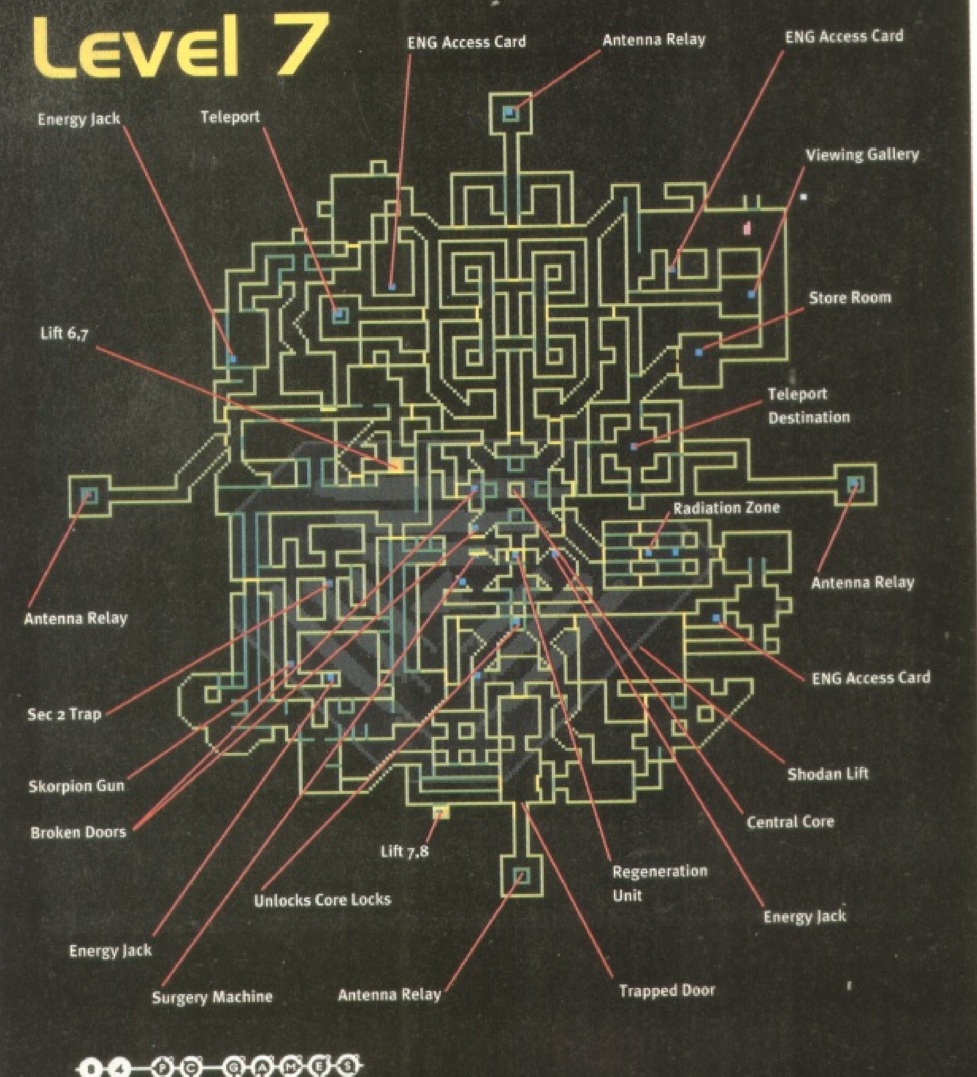
Before you start, be sure that you have the four packs of plastique explosive from Level 4, at least one logic probe and are fully healed up. The surgery machine and regeneration unit are extremely tough to reach early on, and you'll need that health soon enough. Get your big weapons ready and take Diego's lift from Level 6.

Once out of the lift, the easiest path is to clear the south-west section, heading for the Skorpion machine gun. Be careful of the nasty SEC-2 robot that'll jump out at you and try to rip you to bloody shreds (possibly with a great deal of success, unless you're exceedingly cautious). With the Skorpion in hand and an ion rifle at the ready, move north, clearing the way to the western-most antenna relay. Plant the plastique in the panel at the antenna's base, and then high-tail it out of there — it's very easy to get caught in the devastating blast of these heavy-duty explosives.

From this relay take out the north-west corner and gingerly work your way around to the northern relay. The corridor network to the south of this second antenna is absolutely crawling with cyborg enforcers, so it's guns at the ready.

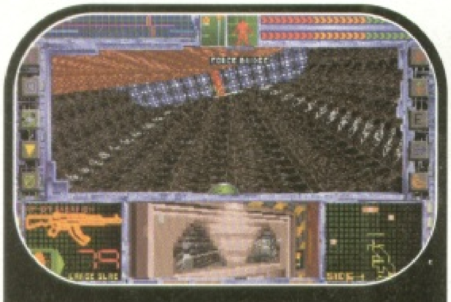
The north-east area is next. Moving clockwise round the edge of the map will take you to a store-room and eventually the east relay. Three down, one to go. Now you're in position to go to the central core and through the southern door on the core's upper level. This is the jackpot — the lock to the core doors, regeneration unit, surgery machine and energy jack all in one space. Heal up and prepare for the last bit.

Going straight south allows you access to the final areas: Shodan's CPU room, the lift to Level 8 and the


Level 7

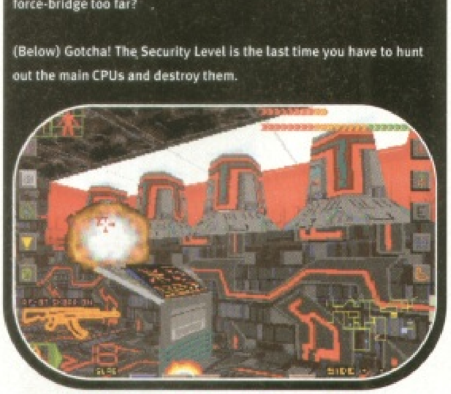
(Above) Aaiiee! The elite guard! Keep your shields up, keep you head down — and keep firing. Hopefully he'll keel over before you do.

(Below) The only good Cortex Reaver is a dead Cortex Reaver. Power up you shield, grab that plasma rifle and plug the sucker full of lead.



(Above) It's a long way up, and a hard fight to get there — but is it a force-bridge too far?

(Below) Gotcha! The Security Level is the last time you have to hunt out the main CPUs and destroy them.



fourth relay. This is the nastiest trap of the lot, because it looks so innocent. There's a force door to the relay. A simple panel puzzle opens it, but when you set the explosive and try to run away, Shodan closes the door. You're trapped and destined to be blown to bits with the antenna.

How do you escape? Well, behind the door when it was open is another puzzle — a really hard one this time. When the door closes, the panel is exposed. You have about ten seconds to solve the puzzle, open the door, and run like hell. Alternatively, have a logic probe at the ready and take the quick way out, thereby assuring your escape. Hurrah — you've stuffed Shodan's plans a third time. Now you just need to finish off Shodan herself...

Oi! Let Me In!

The only problem with going up to the bridge and giving Shodan what for is that she won't let you in. The first door on the Security Level is firmly slammed shut in your face and you can't get through, even if you say "Pretty please". What you need is a major spanner to put into the works, and what better spanner than the total destruction of the base. If you set the reactor to self-destruct, then maybe Shodan'll have to open the door to let the other cyborgs onto the bridge, before trying a Star Trek-esque saucer seperation. Worth a try? Trust us.

To set the reactor to blow, you need to work your way back up the levels, going to each room where you destroyed the CPUs, and looking on the screens for a single digit number. These constantly changed previously, so you'll have to find the destruct code lottery winners for yourself. Ours would be totally different, as will yours if you play the game again.

For each of Levels 1 to 6 you'll get a digit, which will add up to two three-number codes. Note these down, and (unless you've already been there) get the E-Suit Version 2 from the maintenance office on Level 3, using Abe Girham's severed head to pass the retina scan. Then it's back to the Reactor Level.

Apart from a couple of SEC-2 bots that have been stationed near the lift and an endless supply of hoppers, you'll find things really only get tough in the reactor core room itself. As your body is battered by huge doses of radiation you'll find fliers, SEC-1 and SEC-2 bots all over the place. Clear the room with your shield on if necessary, leaving to charge up at the energy jack in the north-eastern part of the main corridor as and when you need more juice.

Without the threat of being shot to ribbons, you can go to the very centre of the core, where you'll find a repulsor lift to the self-destruct controls (just look straight up from the middle of the reactor core, and there it is). Punch the code from Levels 1 to 3 into the security panel, and then follow it with the code from Levels 4 to 6.

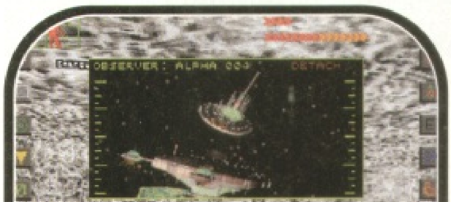
The self-destruct will now be active — pull the big lever, and watch as Citadel Station starts to shake itself violently to pieces. Sirens will sound, and the whole screen will rock from side to side at regular intervals. It's very disconcerting, but it'll stop when the whole place blows up in a little while — don't worry, you won't be on-board by then.

More practically, you can now make your way back to that door on Level 8. Shodan's sent some big goons after you, and you're likely to have a bit of a battle for the reactor level lift, but once you're through that you can pelt it down through the levels more or less unmolested. And what do you know? The door to the Security Level is open.

Security, Schmecurity!

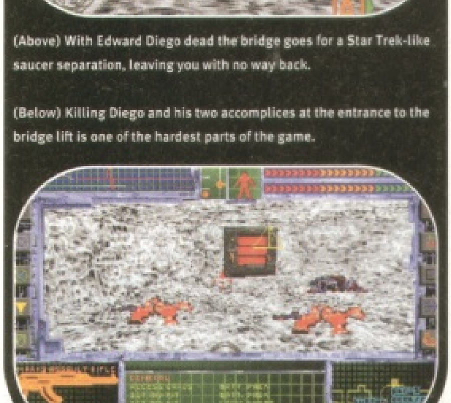
The Security Level's well worth taking your time over (unless you're playing on Difficulty Level 3, in which case Citadel Station hasn't got a lot of time before it does a fair impersonation of the Death Star's final moments). Use the accessible parts of the central core to take cover and get out of cross-fire situations — and there are plenty of those.

The fliers should be easy to wipe out and the mutant cyborgs, who lurk in each corner of the core's surrounding corridor, can be finished off by firing at them from an angle before they spot you. That leaves the assassins high up on the walls in niches. You can't hit them from the ground, so expect to take a few hits as you clear the ground floor. With the ground level of the core cleaned out, you have to start on the peripher-



(Above) With Edward Diego dead the bridge goes for a Star Trek-like saucer separation, leaving you with no way back.

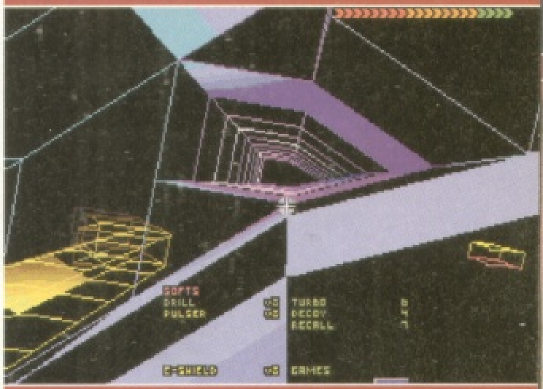
(Below) Killing Diego and his two accomplices at the entrance to the bridge lift is one of the hardest parts of the game.



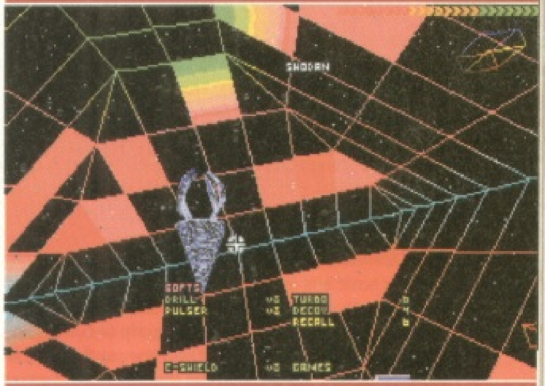
High Noon

After all the cyborgs are dead and gone, you still have to face Shodan on her home turf...

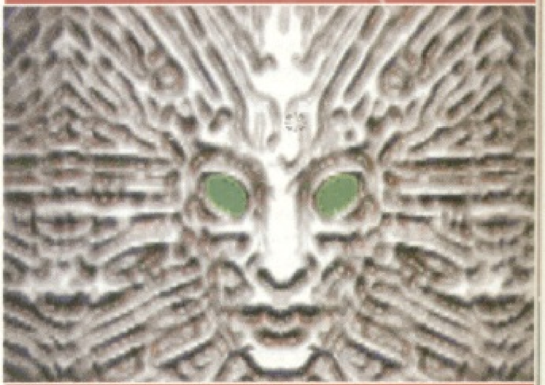
The first few rooms are connected by vast, vault-like corridors, and each contains one piece of top-grade software and (thankfully) minimal opposition. There's no time limit in this section, so relax a little, take your time and gather the maximum equipment.



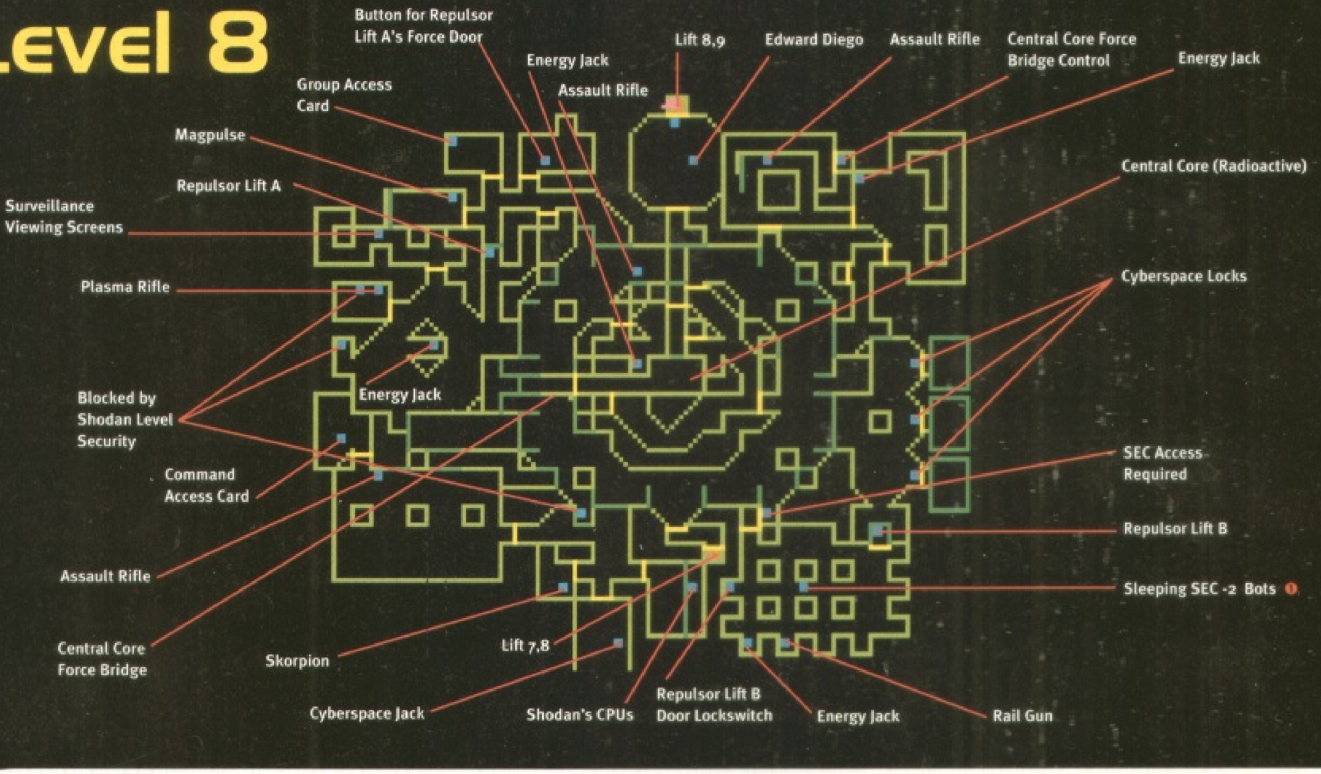
You'll quickly reach a circular passage with several branches into the main central chamber. There Shodan awaits, who immediately starts assimilating you. Your vision slowly gets blotted out and you can't escape since there's no exit to this part of Cyberspace.



If the final showdown (or should that be 'final Shodan', perhaps?) goes badly and you don't win, then you get assimilated into the network and unceremoniously dumped out of the game. Let's hope that you can avoid this fate and cross the final hurdle.



Level 8


Button for Repulsor Lift A's Force Door
Energy Jack
Lift 8,9
Edward Diego
Assault Rifle
Central Core Force Bridge Control
Energy Jack
Group Access Card
Assault Rifle
Magpulse
Repulsor Lift A
Central Core (Radioactive)
Surveillance Viewing Screens
Plasma Rifle
Cyberspace Locks
Energy Jack
Blocked by Shodan Level Security
Command Access Card
SEC Access Required
Repulsor Lift B
Assault Rifle
Sleeping SEC -2 Bots ❶
Central Core Force Bridge
Skorpion
Lift 7,8
Repulsor Lift B Door Lockswitch
Cyberspace Jack
Shodan's CPUs
Energy Jack
Rail Gun

al areas. Go to the northwest first, up a low lift, and towards Repulsor A. You'll need the Group 6 access card, so pick that up on your way.

At the top of Repulsor A you'll get to several areas blocked off by Shodan level security. Remember to come back to them once you've totalled all the cameras on the level. The plasma rifle is particularly fun, although on full power it eats up enough energy to keep a small city going. Only use it when you have an energy jack nearby. Fortunately, on the Security Level energy jacks aren't in short supply, and neither are medi-kits. Stock up your inventory with these as you progress through the rooms, since you can't come back once you're on the bridge.

Your basic aim on the Security Level is to travel anti-clockwise around until you get to the northern part. The Command access card is vital, and a trip in Cyberspace opens all sorts of doors. At the very southern-most room you'll find the CPUs for the level, so blast them as you pass.

With the CPUs out of action, you now have to return to ground level and move round to the Repulsor lift in the south-eastern corner of the level. This takes you far above to the repair room, where a dozen or so SEC-2 robots sleep. This room needs to be taken carefully. Rushing around is guaranteed to get you turned into a nasty red smear on the walls within seconds. When you enter, the door closes behind you and you're left facing one bot. Turn up your lantern so that you can see far ahead, power up the shield and unstrap the magpulse. Two hits wipe out a SEC-2 robot, so having a full clip is a very good idea.

When you're ready, blast the first robot, which will wake the others in small groups. Turn left to wipe out the group along the northern wall, and then get the two that pop out of the side passages as well. Now you can move into the room, sliding your way slowly along the northern-most wall, blasting any robot that foolishly shows its metallic face.

Secure the open eastern area and work your way back towards the energy jack. If you reach it, you should have cleared the whole place. Take one last quick sweep, picking up any ammo going, and hit the button to Repulsor lift B.

Moving north now you can clear out any resistence to the last rooms, using medi-kits whenever you feel the need (after all, there are so many about, and it seems a shame to leave them behind). Spraying the scenery with bullets, you'll finally come to the force bridge control. The force bridge itself is on the western side of the core, so drop back to ground level and then up again on that side. Where previously there was only a string of energy mines (placed there to stop you using jump-jet boots — clever thinking, Shodan) you'll now see a bridge.

Move across the bridge and into the core. It's highly radioactive, but your E-Suit should protect you from the worst while you climb up to the north-facing force bridge and into the lift room. This is the place you are most likely to die on the whole level. The block in the centre of the room houses three cyborgs — and tough hombres they are too.

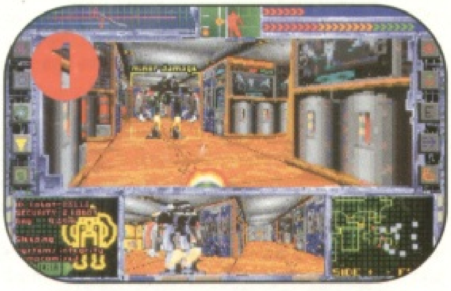
The first one is Edward Diego, back for another crack at you after Level 6 (he gets Brownie points for persistence, if nothing else). He is released behind you as you try to open the lift doors, so have your shield, sensaround and penetrator shells to the ready.

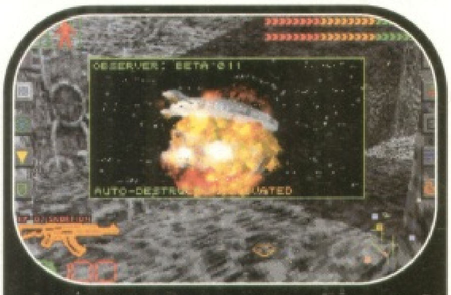
Duck and dive until he's dead, at which point the other two sections of central wall release *two more* cyborgs, though of a standard variety this time. Diego has the access card you need for the lift so, if all opposition has been silenced, it's time to face that dreaded elevator music just one last time...

The Final Frontier

The first thing that happens as you start around the bridge is that it separates from the rest of the station, and the rest of the station blows up. At least you won't have to face the sirens and shaking screen any more. Time to take a look around.

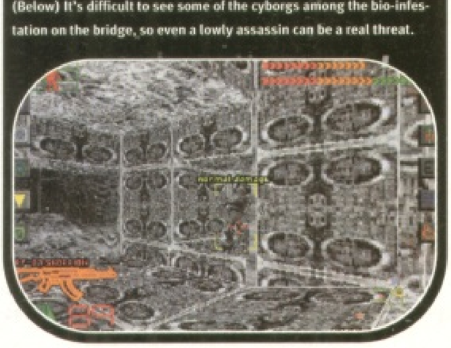
Your first impression is likely to be "What *wild* decor!" — and you wouldn't be far wrong. There's a pulsing, throbbing, undulating biological infestation covering all the walls, rather like the underground lair

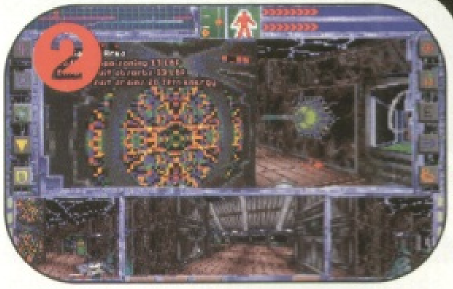


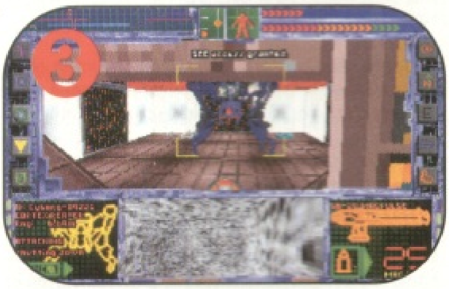

OBSERVER: BETA 011
AUTO-DESTRU ATED

(Above) Thar she blows! The reactor explosion takes out most of Citadel Station, leaving you to clear up the few remaining enemies...

(Below) It's difficult to see some of the cyborgs among the bio-infestation on the bridge, so even a lowly assassin can be a real threat.







in Aliens. Worse, it's grey and it moves, so it's very difficult to spot hidden robots (who are also grey). You can literally pass an assassin and not know until he halves your health.

That said, the corridor around the central core is pretty easy-going, at least by the standard of Edward Diego, sadistic cyborg extraordinaire. Slowly work your way around, being sure to check all corners for lurking cyborgs, and check out the little rooms to the north, south, east and west as you go.

The northern area contains an energy jack at the entrance and a Shield Version 4. This cuts down the energy usage of the shield unit from 105 to 40 JPM, which means that in the final room you will be able to keep your shield on at the same time as the E-Suit soaks up the radiation.

The western room has a magpulse rifle, something which you've probably had in your armoury since the first level (at least, you have if you've been following our solution). However, there's a Cortex Reaver in here, and if you're committed to wiping out all of Shodan's meanest henchmen, this big critter's a must. There's only one of him, so if you duck and dive you should finish him off fairly quickly.

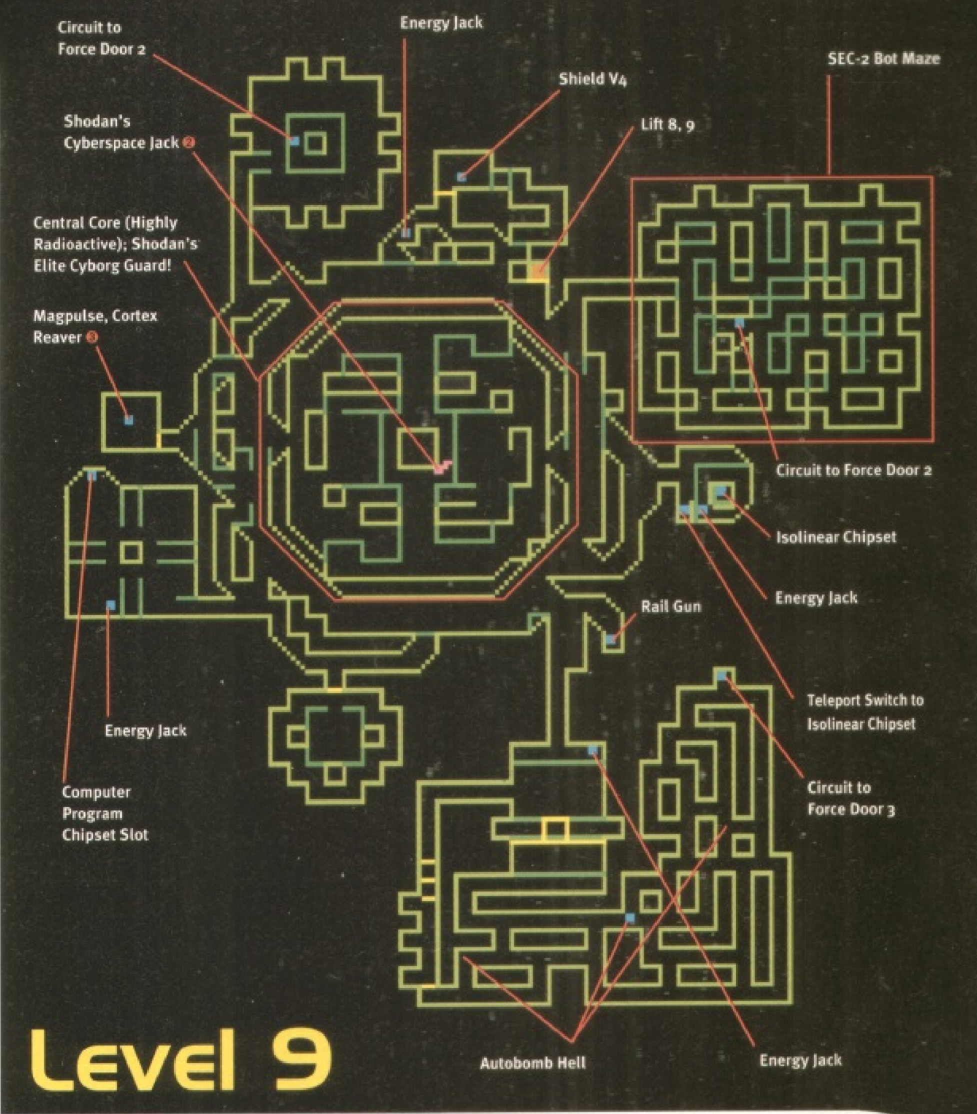
The southern room has several bits of minor equipment, and two medi-kits. This is your chance to stock up on health if you haven't already.

As for the eastern room, you need to go here to get the isolinear chipset, without which you can't open the central core. Hit the big button on the south wall to teleport to the central cage, and then hit the button on the floor to get back. There's an energy jack here, too.

With the hub cleared, it's time to get into the central core itself. To do that you have to open the three force doors to the main computer room in the southwest. Each of the three remaining areas (to the northwest, northeast and southeast) contain controls to one door.

The SEC-2 robot maze in the northeast corner of the bridge is covered by a force wall, until you hit the button on the north wall. At that point, a hole opens in the floor, letting you down, and a little exploration with your trusty magpulse in hand should see you right to the circuit to the first force door.

The north-westerly area is one large room with SEC-2 robots hidden in alcoves around the walls. Hit the button in the first open alcove to release one robot. Kill it, and in its alcove you'll find another switch. Push that and, somewhat predictably, another robot is let loose.



Level 9

This continues until all six robots are turned to scrap metal, at which point you can go to the central podium and open Force Door 2. Because the robots only come out and attack one at a time, you shouldn't have any problems here.

The south-eastern section beyond the entry room is a series of corridors populated by an endless supply of autobombs. Stick on the shield, get the magnum ready with a full clip of heavy slugs (the best against autobombs) and charge up to farthest alcove. There you'll find the circuit to Force Door 3. Solve it quickly and high-tail it out of there, before the army of bombs descends. There's nothing else you want here.

Once all three force doors are open, you can enter the south-western room which, disappointingly, has no guardians at all. Power up your energy at the energy jack, use a medi-kit if needed and take a breather. Then stick the isolinear chipset into the computer program chipset slot on the north wall, and the door to the central core will slide open...

Suddenly, It Was All Over...

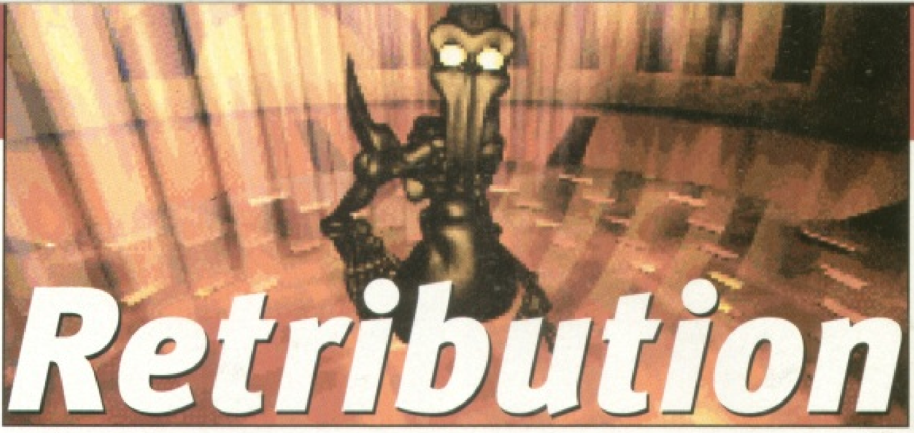
Bursting into the core with all guns blazing is a great opportunity to get one last shoot-out from System Shock. There are a dozen or so elite cyborgs hanging around the core, and as long as you have your shield and some major weaponry to hand, you should have a blast (quite literally) without too much danger of dying. Use those spare medi-kits any time you feel like it, and throw a few grenades around, just for good measure — after this battle you'll have no further use for them anyway.

When the smoke clears, hoof it up to the central podium and, with your finest Cyber-software, jack into Shodan's personal Cyberspace jack. Follow our guide to Shodan's domain, but be aware that if you get thrown out of Cyberspace through integrity failures too many times you risk having your health drop to one bar, and the next time you get ejected the radiation could work its way through the E-Suit and finish you. So, if you get to that stage, use another medi-kit to bolster you health — just in case.

Shodan's demise or your assimilation is a bit of a toss up in the end. Simply throw everything at her and hope for the best. Succeed and you're a hero (well, alive, at any rate). Fail and Shodan gets the last — and longest — laugh, which is very frustrating after having spent so long getting there. Remember also that you can't save in Cyberspace, so you might want to save before you go in, just in case things don't work out quite as you planned.

And that's it. Until the next time a computer goes totally insane and Origin decide to do a game about it, farewell...

If completing Gremlin's sci-fi combat sim is turning out to be more difficult than finding a choc-ice in the desert, don't fret and fuss — just chill out with this luscious playguide.



Retribution

1. The Oberon Oasis

Mission 1: Use your fighter's homing/guiding missiles to take out the flimsy Krellan Fighters or improve your dog-fight skills by wasting them with your lasers. Only rockets can destroy the ground-based missile silos, so fly low and slow on the approach, use the rockets sparingly and try to blast each silo with a single run. Don't fire on the other buildings in the Oasis. The missile silo furthest south of the Oasis fires smart missiles, so launch chaff pods as you approach, fly parallel to it for a couple of seconds and then hit it with a few rockets.

Mission 2: Destroy the bio-weapon development plants in the Oasis. Waves of missile-carrying enemy fighters will rapidly appear on the scene, so launch chaff pods as soon as you see the missile warning. Approach each enemy fighter until your targetting systems lock on to it, then fire a missile from close range, finishing it off with your laser guns before its shield recharges.

Mission 3: One scientist awaits rescue directly behind your starting position, two more are in the Oasis and the fourth stands on flattish ground to the east side of the map. Avoid climbing mountains and steep hills. Use missiles to destroy enemy tanks but keep on the move to avoid their rockets. Oh, and avoid wasting your own scientists. Your radar system will pinpoint the scientists when they come into range.

Mission 4: Launch the Vulcan device as soon as you start the mission. Fly around — probably more than once — to destroy the bio-pods which the Krellans keep releasing, as you wait for the whole area to be destroyed by the Vulcan device.

2. The Hydor Power Station

Mission 1: Avoid flying over or near the the power station as the four defence towers spew out missiles and laser fire. The towers are also indestructible by conventional weapons. Destroy the hover-trains' engines to stop the carriages, making them easier targets. The port is protected by six small silos which fire rockets and lasers. Be warned that your chaff pods won't work here, so make each of your four rockets count. If you're hit by a laser then carry on, but if a couple of rockets batter you then get out of there — using the afterburners, if necessary — and only return when your shields are recharged.

Mission 2: Use rockets to take out the remaining silos round the port. Try to destroy as many enemy vehicles as possible at the start of the mission as they are away from the power-station. Use missiles to destroy the ones that finally make it to the power-station — but keep your distance!

Mission 3: Fly straight to the port and use rockets to pulverise all its installations. Fly south towards the small cove where you'll find your final target. Don't worry about shooting down enemy aircraft.

Mission 4: This is a toughy! Fly immediately towards the power station. Use rockets to annihilate just one of the defence towers — this will probably take several bombing runs to achieve (releasing chaff bombs regularly should help). After destroying the defence tower, head south towards the cove and pick up the torpedo canister. Fly low and close to the unprotected side of the power station and release a torpedo. Don't forget to launch chaff too. A direct torpedo hit on the station will set it alight and it will sink. Miss and you'll have to repeat the mission.

3. The Procyon Initiative

Mission 1: Mines are concentrated over the large radar. Stay as far away from them as possible and pick them off one by one with your laser gun. If you get too close they'll home in on you and you'll have to do a runner. Green missile silos fire missiles so be careful. Exterminate the large radar with lasers or rockets, but save some rockets for the silos.

Mission 2: Use rockets to waste the power plant and use laser/missiles on the missile-equipped vehicles. Watch out for an onslaught by enemy fighters.

Mission 3: All four infantry transporters must make it the Control Centre for mission success. Use chaff to divert the enemy missiles away from the transporters. Fly low and co-ordinate missiles and laser fire against the enemy tanks. Don't remain stationary or you'll be a sitting duck to the many heavy enemy tanks around. Try to take out the enemy tanks closer to your transporters first.

Mission 4: The Earthworm missiles move underground, starting from directly below the 12 enemy tanks. The first missile approaches from the north, the second from the east. Fly low to spot the dark trail they leave behind them and then mangle them with your laser guns and rockets, as missiles won't lock on. Three Earthworms are launched from each of the four compass points — destroy at least two out of the three to save the Control Centre.

4. Fragmos III

Mission 1: The distress signal is a Krellan trap. The signal comes from an object on the planet surface (it has a face on it). Don't pick it up because it'll self-destruct and knock out your shields. You'll eventually meet a Krellan Battle-Pod. Shoot the surrounding light enemy fighters then, while avoiding the pod's missiles, lock onto it with your missiles. Fly towards it firing chaff and missiles until it dies. Keep your shields up at all times.

Mission 2: This is a night mission. Destroy the missile silos surrounding the aerodrome before attacking the aerodrome itself. Not every target needs blasting for mission success, but most do.

Mission 3: This mission is straightforward as long as you survive the Krellan fighters that turn up in very large numbers.

Mission 4: Destroy the force-field generator next to the storage tanks by flooding the canyon. Achieve this by blasting the other forcefield generator near the dam, then use rockets to pierce the middle part of the dam which sends the water cascading out. This deactivates the storage tanks' shields and you can then waste them with rockets. Watch out for the hordes of Krellan fighters which buzz around.

5. Nemesis

Mission 1: Avoid the Krellan base and certain death. Head for the weapons factory, destroy it with rockets then get out — pronto.

Mission 2: Clear the area of enemy tanks and rocket launchers. The latter are found around the now-defunct weapons factory. Get to maximum speed and head straight for the factory ruins. The launchers can't fire on you because they're facing the wrong way and they can't turn around. Move behind them and mash them with your rockets before concentrating on the enemy tanks.

Mission 3: It's dogfight time against the fighter-bombers. Co-ordinate laser guns with missiles and, when possible, fly closely behind one and release a rocket. A couple of laser shots should finish it off. Keep away from the enemy camp

Mission 4: Your tanks attack in two waves of four. It's unlikely that the first wave will reach the enemy base but ensure at least one of the second wave makes it. Your tanks are more powerful than the Krellan ones but are outnumbered eight to one, so your supporting role is vital. Fly south over your own tanks and divert the enemy by dropping chaff. Fly just ahead of your tanks, releasing chaff pods regularly, and use missiles to destroy the most threatening enemy tanks. The second wave delays its attack so use this time to recharge your shields and weaken the opposition as much as possible.

6. Encounter On Etheros

Mission 1: Fly around, taking out all comers. Avoid enemy silos because you have no rockets. Don't rush things. Clear the tanks slowly and methodically. Always wait for your shields to recharge before heading for the next target.

Mission 2: Use rockets to annihilate enemy ground targets. Destroy the three silos surrounding the Atmosphere-processor first because they're packing homing missiles.

Mission 3: Watch out for missiles-launchers around the area and Krellan fighter-bombers. Use your missiles sparingly against the bombers, destroy missile launchers with laser guns and the Atmosphere-processor with rockets.

Mission 4: Destroy the ground targets quickly to avoid the ever-thickening shower of meteors.

7. The Inferno Colonies

Mission 1: Take out the missile-launchers first. Fly around the colony structures, not over them, to avoid the air mines. Fly low and destroy the missile-launchers surrounding the colonies, then turn on the mines.

Mission 2: This one's a large-scale dogfight, so throw up a prayer and let your flying skills see you through the battle.

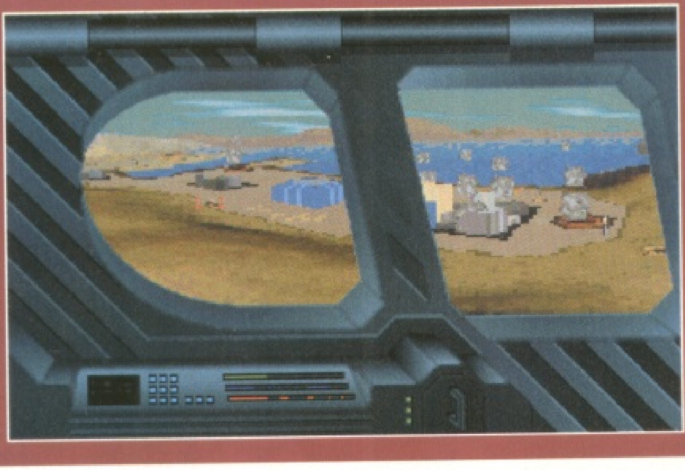
Mission 3: On top of the colony structure to the north there are two missile launchers. Destroy these first by bombarding the colony structure below them. Use rockets to demolish the roads and bridges and to sink the enemy tanks in lava. Use your rockets and missiles sparingly and keep as far away from the enemy as possible, i.e. so they're in your range but you're out of theirs. Give your fighter time to recharge its shields.

Mission 4: Shoot down the enemy fighters first, then take out the air-mines and finally attack the base.

8. The Krellan Shield

Mission 1: Use the map to locate the enemy tanks as they approach the research facility, then destroy them with guided and smart missiles. Don't let them destroy any part of the research facility.

Mission 2: Similar to the first mission but with heavier tanks, the trick in this mission is to fly low and close and attack with rockets. The Krellans will attack both buildings but concentrate on defending the one in the centre of the map. Act quickly to save both buildings.



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Mission 3: The four bombs are scattered around the area and the Krellan tanks are everywhere. Don't spend too much time fighting because the bombs must be destroyed within a time limit. As time goes by the ground shakes more violently until the research centre is destroyed. The bombs are located in the canyons to the north and south of the research centre.

Mission 4: The Krellan tanks fire homing missiles. You can use chaff pods but these aren't as effective as usual in the narrow canyons because, after launching them, it's difficult to move away. Fly low inside the canyons to limit the number of missiles fired at you. The truncators can't threaten you directly but they do burn down the rock, thus threatening the research centre, so it's a race against time. The truncators are situated to the north and south of the the research facility.

9. The Eden Fields

Mission 1: Concentrate first on the silos. There are some Krellan light fighters but these pose little threat. Destroy the radar units on the ground to complete the mission.

Mission 2: Blast the base and its installations but watch out for the Krellan battle-pod. It appears from nowhere and is supported by light fighters. As soon as you spot it, fly directly towards it and fire rockets when you have it in your sights.

Mission 3: No Eden Fields should be destroyed — the mines ahead are the main threat. Fly parallel to the Eden Fields from north to south (or vice versa) and slightly head of them, destroying any mines you encounter. Take out the distracting Krellan fighters quickly and return to your main mine-blowing task.

Mission 4: Prevent the Krellan fighters from destroying the Eden Fields. Only one machine needs to survive. The enemy will concentrate their attack on the machines, so stick closely on their tails and take them out from behind. Move quickly to avoid another attack wave of enemy ships.

10. The Deep Mine

Mission 1: No surprises here — just fly around, destroy the enemy targets and then return back safely to the Coursa.

Mission 2: Krellan androids equipped with twin laser guns defend the site, and they will strive to surround you and blast you to smithereens. Unfortunately for you, they're very accurate from a distance, so keep moving and destroy them as soon as you spot them using missiles if necessary. Destroying ore samples accidentally leads to mission failure so beware.

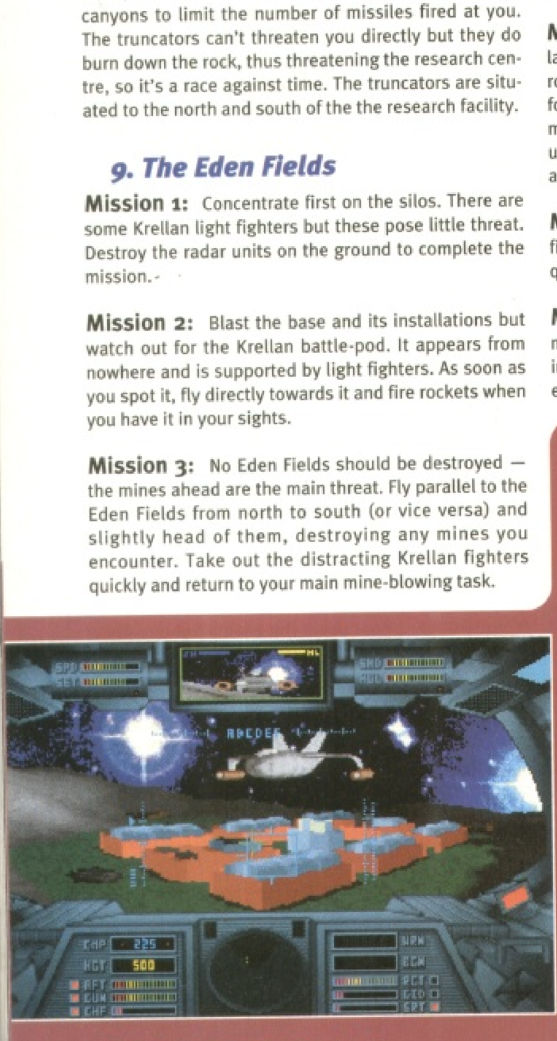
Mission 3: Defend yourself against the enemy fighters, take out the ground targets and get out as quickly as you can.

Mission 4: Three supply trucks move from the mines to the processing plant — one in the north, one in the west and one in the east. Drop a time-bomb on each truck. As soon as the truck enters the processing plant it will explode, damaging the entrance and the plant itself. All three need to be destroyed here to accomplish the mission.

11. The Last Warrior

Mission 1: The enemy is especially vicious but you must avoid harming the Mandamii installations on the ground. Be methodical and patient in your Krellan ground target destruction and fly low to reduce the effectiveness of the Krellan missiles.

Mission 2: Exterminate the four towers next to the air-strip to allow the Mandamii officers to escape. Don't forget to destroy the Krellan fighters on the ground as well as those in the air.



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PCG

cheat lab

And it's Blackburn 0 Cheat Lab 4. Tips for Magic Carpet opened the scoring after 10 minutes, Frontier: Elite 2 hints headed two fine goals in the second half and the Inferno cheat has just hit a 25 yard scorcher into the top corner of the Rover's net. Magnificent. Flowers had no chance...

Warcraft

Interplay

Whether you're playing the Orcs or the Humans, if any of you are struggling with Interplay's very addictive fantasy game Warcraft, then Mervyn Lemon from Andover has a sneaky cheat that can turn the tide of the conflict your way.

As soon as a scenario begins (it doesn't matter which one, but sadly this cheat doesn't work in the caves), save your game into a free slot and call it CHEAT. Remember the slot number that you save the game in, i.e the third slot, and then quit out of the game and back to DOS.

If you picked slot 3 your file will have been saved as SAVE3.SAV in the WARCRAFT directory. If you have a Hex editor like PCTools or Xtree Gold, load it up, log onto the Warcraft directory and make the following changes to the SAVE3.SAV hex values:

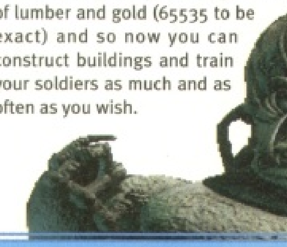
```
0606 FF FF          (65535 Lumber)
061A FF FF          (65535 Gold)
```

Alternatively, if you use the DOS-based editor, EDLIN, log onto the WARCRAFT directory, start the editor and type the sequence of commands below:

```
>NSAVE3.SAV
>L
>E 0706 FF FF       (65535 Lumber)
>E 071A FF FF       (65535 Gold)
>W
>Q
```

structures destroyed
You 0
Enemy 0
gold mined
You 12,600
Enemy 0
structures built
You 8
Enemy 0
lumber harvested
You 3,600
Enemy 0

Load up Warcraft again and you'll find that these hacks have given you a huge amount of lumber and gold (65535 to be exact) and so now you can construct buildings and train your soldiers as much and as often as you wish.



Inferno

Ocean

At last, an Inferno cheat and it's all thanks to a young, and dare we say, very dashing Nick Clarkson from Macclesfield. But before I divulge this single, game-busting word, please think long and hard about whether you want to actually use it. If you've been struggling through Inferno honestly, then the cheat below, which makes your ship invulnerable and puts all seven combat pods at your disposal, may just spoil the whole game.

But if you're perfectly happy to cheat (and if you're not, stop reading now and skip over to the next tip), load up Inferno, start a game as usual, hold down the right SHIFT key and type the word LOLIFE. As I mentioned earlier, this will make your ship totally indestructible and once the cheat is activated you can press ALT and P to pause the game and numbers 1-7 to give yourself the various combat pod power-ups.

Frontier: Elite 2

Gametek

After our desperate pleas for Frontier cheats in issue 7, Brian Thomson from Aberdeenshire and a guy from Durham who just calls himself Commander Jameson, have written in with two more Frontier-cracking tips. So, if you want to bump up your Elite rating or you'd like to leap 660 light years across the galaxy in a single hyperspace jump, then read on, dear reader, read on...

Firstly, the mysterious Commander Jameson has a cheat that allows you to quickly and easily boost your Elite rating. Simply nip along to Mars High, buy a Mining Laser and then fly to Phobos (Mars' major moon). Stop when you're within about 0.5km of the moon, put the time control on '>>>' and then fire at Phobos with the Mining Laser. Keep firing at the moon and every few seconds you will get a message from the Elite Federation saying 'Right On Commander'. As you keep going, your rating will increase through all the stages right up to Elite.

But, if you're several billion miles away from Mars High, you'll probably need Brian Thomson's cheat which allows you to leap great distances in a single bound. Using any ship, access the galactic map and mark a star system that is 660 light years (82.5 grid sectors) away from your current position. Then leave the map and engage your hyperspace drive. Amazingly, you'll arrive at the distant system and you'll have used the same amount of fuel that you would have used if you'd performed a maximum hyperspace jump. Best of all, you can use this cheat to leap distances in blocks of 660 light years. So, for example, if you add another 660 you could hyperspace 1,320 light years. Add another and you can jump a massive 1,980 and so on.

Oh, just in case you reach anywhere remote, here are a few inhabited planets you might want to check out: Laanbe in grid sector 0, -1792; Dazeia in grid sector 1, -1792 and Oltiso also in grid sector 1, -1792. Happy exploring.

Heretic

Id Software

If you've played through the Shareware version of Id Software's latest Doom-clone, Heretic, and you've transformed your friends into chickens with the Morph Ovum, you might just be interested in those all-important Heretic cheat codes. As you've probably discovered, you can't just type IDKFA to get all the weapons, there's a completely different list of codes for Heretic. Like Doom, these codes can be typed at any time (as long as you've started a game) and the cheats work with both the Shareware and the registered versions of the game. And so, without further mindless ado, here they are...

KITTY	**Toggles the clipping mode on/off**
RAVMAP	**Map Mode (reveals the full map)**
MASSACRE	**Kills every monster on the level**
SKEL	**Gives you all the keys**
RAMBO	**Gives you all the weapons**
QUICKEN	**Toggles God mode on/off (Invulnerability)**
PONCE	**Restores health to 100%**
SHAZAM	**Gives you a Tome of Power**
ENGAGE??	**Skips levels, i.e ENGAGE15**

(where 1 denotes the episode and 5 indicates the level).

GIMME **Gives you various items/objects:**

a — Ring of Invincibility
b — Shadowsphere
c — Quartz Flask
d — * not available in Shareware version *
e — Tome of Power
f — Torch
g — Bomb of the Ancients
h — Morph Ovum
i — Wings of Wrath
j — * not av available in Shareware version *

Magic Carpet

Electronic Arts

I don't know about you, but I'm the impatient type. I don't want to battle through Magic Carpet, gaining the a tiny bonus fireball spell here and a restore health power-up there, I want all the spells and I want them right away. I don't want to spend five levels blasting bees with a piddly fireball, I want to be able to carve huge canyons in the hillsides, blast dragons with meteors and cast lightning spells over Emu Riders...

And thanks to Andy Scott from sunny Chesterfield, there's an easy way to avoid all this hard work, to increase your Mana to unbelievable levels, get all the fabulously powerful spells and to skip through all the levels to the really tough buggers with the Wyverns in them. Simply, press the I key to access the Magic Carpet communications mode and then type the word RATTY. Now hit the Return key and this will activate the cheat mode. When you've done this, use the key combinations opposite to access the various cheats...

ALT and F1 — Gives you all the spells
ALT and F2 — Gives you more Mana
ALT and F3 — Destroys all players
ALT and F4 — Destroys all castles
ALT and F5 — Destroys all balloons
ALT and F6 — Heal
ALT and F7 — Kills all creatures

---

cheat lab
Interactive

Help. I need somebody. Help. Not just anybody. Help. You know I need someone. Heeeelllppp!

Dear Cheat Lab,

I have managed to find two parts of the map in Monkey Island 2, but I'm now stuck. I cannot find anything in the Crypt and I can't remove the blockage from the sink in the Governor's mansion. Please can you help me overcome these problems and tell me how to operate the pump.

M.K Cox,
Thirsk, Yorks.

Hmmm. Not the most descriptive plea for help, but I'll see what I can do. If you've made it into the Crypt you must have Stan's key, but it sounds as if you're missing the book of Pirate Quotations. In Governor Phatt's bedroom, use any library book that you're holding with the book that's lying on the bed (i.e the book of Pirate Quotations). Forget the blocked sink, it isn't important, sail back to the Crypt on Scabb Island and open the coffin that matches Rapp Scallion's quote. Get the ashes that lie inside it. From here on in, it's up to you, but if you want to operate the pump at the top of the waterfall you're going to need the hypnotised monkey, which you get by putting the banana on the metronome and... oh, I'm sure you can work it out for yourself.

Dear Cheat Lab,

In Little Big Adventure, I have penetrated Fortress Island and I've found the third runic stone, but when I drop into the dark room containing the final stone, I can't get out. There's no exit. Please Help.

M.K Cox
Thirsk, Yorks.

You again, eh? Well, this bit of LBA seems to be causing lots of problems and although I answered this question last month in the final part of the LBA player's guide, here's the solution again if you missed it. If you use the flask of water on the Runic stone, the whole room will explode and you'll be dumped back outside in the smoking ruins of the Fortress. All you then have to do is wander back into the ruins and head northwards into the construction site for the confrontation with Dr Funfrock and the final part of the game.

Dear Cheat Lab,

I am playing Hand Of Fate but I can't find any Sweet and Sour sauce or any serum for the Sceptic spell. Please could you help?

Anwar Mahmood,
Burton-on-Trent.

Right. To make the Sceptic spell you need to stand at the Altar of Doubt and then (a) make some Sweet and Sour sauce by mixing the taffy (from the Inn) and the vinegar (from the Farmhouse) in a bowl, (b) pop the sauce into the cauldron with a rabbit's footprint (use mud on the footprint to make a cast), tears (from the Crocodile) and a lucky horseshoe (from the Farmhouse). Fill a flask with the resulting concoction and then place it on the altar. That's all there is to it.

Dear Cheat Lab,

What is the cheat for going through walls in Doom 2: Hell On Earth? I am dying to know.

John Keenan,
Northern Ireland.

An easy one. Just type IDCLIP to toggle the clipping (i.e the walking through walls mode) on and off.

Dear Cheat Lab,

I've laughed my way through the Monkey Island series, I've struggled with the Indy games and I've rolled around on the floor playing Sam & Max and Day of the Tentacle. But I just can't make Spock better in the third mission of Star Trek: 25th Anniversary. According to the helpline I have to use the insulation from the fusion reactor room and use it in the distiller. I also can't get down to the lower levels of the space station without those damned Romulans killing me. Help!

Joe Michalczuk,
Horndean, Portsmouth.

No problem, here's the solution to the episode in full. When you've beamed down to the ARK-7 station, use Spock and McCoy on the computer. Use Spock again on the computer and read the files then head north through the breached door. Use Kirk on the cabinet to the far left and take the anti-grav sled. Go east and then north. Get the wrench and use it on the panel below the computer on the far left. Get the insulation. Use Kirk on the grill on the right to reveal the air vent. Open the access panel and use the wrench on the nozzle of the N2 container. Pick up the container with the anti-grav sled. Go south into the lab. Use the insulation wires with the distillation unit to get some Polycarbonate. Open the freezer unit on the right and pick up the virus sample. Now head west for the complicated bit.

Use the wrench on the nozzles above the two containers. Use the Polycarbonate in the sample door of the synthesiser and then use the synthesiser itself. Get the TLTDH canister that is produced. Turn off the gas at the nozzles and use the anti-grav sled to remove the O2 container. Replace it with the N2 bottle and turn on the gas again. Use the synthesiser again and get the Ammonia. Head east. Use the virus sample on the reproducer and attach the Ammonia canister to the nozzle. Use McCoy on the reproducer and get the cure. Nip back west and use the cure on the sample door. Next use the synthesiser and pick up the syringe. Use the syringe on Spock. Go east and north and use the TLTDH canister on the air vent. Go south again and use the ladder. Walk north, untie the prisoners, use the syringe on the Romulan captain and let him go by using the appropriate choice. Phew!

Stuck in an adventure?
Do you know any hot tips for todays top PC games?

If the answer to either of these questions is "Yes" grab a postcard and send your tips or queries to us at: CHEAT LAB, PC GAMES, Emap Images, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. You never know, you might be lucky enough to win a software prize.

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HAVE RAYGUN WILL TRAVEL!

PREPARE FOR ASSIMILATION!

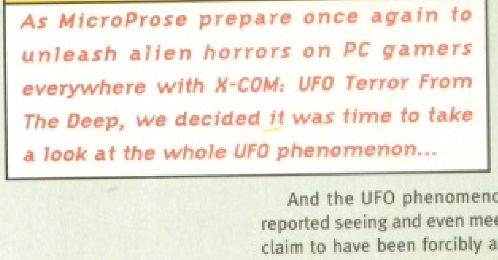
As MicroProse prepare once again to unleash alien horrors on PC gamers everywhere with X-COM: UFO Terror From The Deep, we decided it was time to take a look at the whole UFO phenomenon...

On June 24th, 1947, pilot Kenneth Arnold was flying over the Rocky Mountains in Washington State when he spotted nine luminous objects travelling in formation at an estimated speed of 1,900kph. Arnold later reported that "they flew like a saucer would if you skipped it across the water." It was the first official sighting of what we now call Unidentified Flying Objects (or UFOs) — and the birth of the popular term 'flying saucer'.

UFOs Through History

Since then there have been literally hundreds of thousands of reported UFO sightings all over the world. However, sightings of strange lights and unusual objects in the sky are not a particularly modern phenomenon. The Annals Of Pharaoh Thutmose, estimated to be some 3,400 years old, describe "fire circles" that "shone more in the sky than the brightness of the Sun".

Both the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, two epic Indian religious poems written over 2,000 years ago, contain several passages describing saucer-shaped flying machines called 'vimanas', and even the Bible contains events that can be easily interpreted as UFO-related.

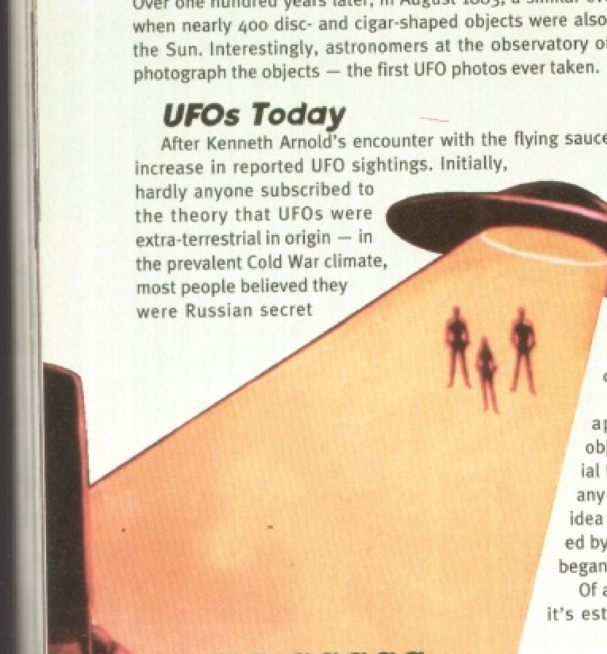


Accounts of UFO sightings — and even possible alien contact and abduction — can be found in hundreds of manuscripts throughout history. And while most of these records are doubtless based on the misinterpretation of completely harmless natural phenomena, there remains a substantial number that cannot be quite so easily explained.

More recently — well, in 1762 actually — a Swiss astronomer by the name of de Rostan saw an enormous spindle-shaped object move slowly in front of the Sun. Over one hundred years later, in August 1883, a similar event happened in Mexico, when nearly 400 disc- and cigar-shaped objects were also seen to pass in front of the Sun. Interestingly, astronomers at the observatory of Zacatecas managed to photograph the objects — the first UFO photos ever taken.

UFOs Today

After Kenneth Arnold's encounter with the flying saucers, there was a massive increase in reported UFO sightings. Initially, hardly anyone subscribed to the theory that UFOs were extra-terrestrial in origin — in the prevalent Cold War climate, most people believed they were Russian secret weapons, developed using Nazi technology captured during WW2.



However, as it became apparent that these objects were capable of aerial feats far beyond those of any nation's technology, the idea that they were craft piloted by beings from alien worlds began to grow in popularity.

Of all the sightings reported, it's estimated that only 5-10% are 'true' UFOs — i.e. they are phenomena that can't be naturally explained. Most confusing from the UFO researcher's point of view is that hardly any two UFO sightings are *exactly* alike, although the type of objects sighted tend to fall into one of four distinct categories, namely:

- **Flying discs resembling saucers or plates.**
- **Cigar- or torpedo-shaped objects.**
- **Glowing spheres.**
- **Luminous balls of light.**

And the UFO phenomenon goes beyond mere sightings. Some people have reported seeing and even meeting the alien occupants of these strange craft. Others claim to have been forcibly abducted by aliens and physically experimented upon. Lunatics? Some maybe, but certainly not all. In some cases there's even 'evidence' that these contacts really occurred, with the subjects suffering burns and sickness akin to that caused by exposure to radiation. As with the UFOs themselves, the confusing thing about these 'close encounters' is that the aliens described are rarely ever alike.

Then there are the bizarre cases of cattle mutilation. Farmers and ranchers around the globe have reported finding their stock brutally murdered, often with organs and limbs surgically removed but without a trace of blood anywhere. And is it more than a coincidence that UFOs are often sighted in the area at the same time that these horrific mutilations occur?

The Official Line

In January 1948, as a response to the immense public interest in and concern about UFOs, the United States Air Force set up Project Sign to monitor and investigate UFO sightings. It was later renamed Project Grudge and then Project Blue Book, and was closed in December 1969. During its lifetime the project examined over 13,000 UFO reports, and concluded that nearly all could be explained quite easily by natural phenomena. Those small number of unexplained cases that remained were, it claimed, no threat to US national security.

Meanwhile, in 1952 the National Security Council of the United States charged the CIA with determining whether UFOs posed a threat to the security of the United States. The resulting Robertson Panel Report, released in January 1953, concluded "the continued emphasis on the reporting of these phenomena does, in these perilous times, result in a threat to the orderly functioning of the body politic." The report went on to recommend that the CIA should continue to debunk the notion of UFOs and attempt to educate the public to accurately recognise aerial phenomena.

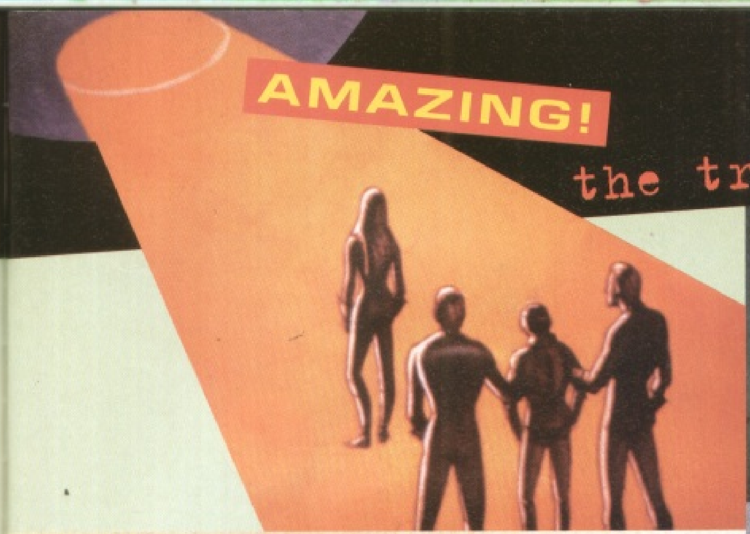
Thus the US government's 'official line' (and one echoed by almost every other government in the world) is that UFOs are of no concern and are certainly no threat to national security. However, the way the US government actually responds to UFO sightings and UFO-related events runs very much counter to that stated attitude, as the following famous incident shows...

The Roswell incident

At 9.50pm on July 2nd, 1947, Mr and Mrs Wilmot were sitting on their porch of their home in the town of Roswell, New Mexico, when they saw a "big glowing object" travel silently and at great speed overhead.

The following morning, civil engineer Barney Barnett was working in the desert some 250 miles west of Roswell when he saw sunlight reflecting off an object in the distance. Thinking it might be a crashed aircraft he went to investigate, only to find the remains of a "metallic, disc-shaped object" roughly 25-30ft in diameter.

As he began exploring the crash site he was joined by some archaeology students from the University Of Pennsylvania, who were in the area and had also spot-



(Top right) It's estimated that over 90% of UFOs can be explained away as sightings of Venus, meteors, lenticular clouds — shown here — or other natural phenomena.
(Far right) A crowd of Russians gathers around the scorched patch of earth where a UFO supposedly landed.
(Above right) Gerroff the giraffe! UFOs can appear in the most unexpected of places!
(Above) This photo, taken over 40 years ago in Oregon by Paul Trent, has been rigorously analysed by almost every UFO researcher, all of whom have concluded that it is not fake.
(Left) This photo, printed in a newspaper in 1951, allegedly shows the body of an alien recovered from a crashed UFO. The paper later admitted it was an April Fool's hoax.
(Far left) In 1963, Paul Villa from New Mexico claimed he was contacted by the aliens on this UFO. He alleged that they had chosen him to do some PR work for them! Experts have declared the photos fake.

ted the wreckage. Together they made the most amazing discovery of all — the bodies of four creatures. Although human-like, their heads were over-large in proportion to their bodies, and they were small eyed and hairless. Each humanoid wore grey, one-piece clothing, without belts or zips.

Suddenly an army officer pulled up in a jeep and told Barnett and the students to clear the area, and not to breath a word of what they'd seen to anybody. Soon more soldiers appeared and the area around the crash site was rapidly cordoned off, and over the next few days the wreckage was removed.

Around the same time, a rancher named W.W. 'Mac' Brazel who lived roughly mid-way between Roswell and the crash site found strange debris — like metallic foil, thin and pliable but very tough — strewn over his land. Brazel showed some pieces of the debris to the local sheriff, who in turn contacted Roswell Army Air Field. Brazel was immediately brought to the base and questioned by the military over several days, while all traces of the debris were removed from his ranch. He was eventually released, but ordered not to talk about his experience.

Despite the witnesses being sworn to silence, it didn't take long for news of these strange discoveries to leak out to the public and press, and a few days later the Public Relations Officer at Roswell Army Air Field issued a sensational and unprecedented official statement confirming that a "flying disc" had been recovered from a ranch near Roswell. Within hours, however, the commander of the Eighth Air Force at Fort Worth in neighbouring Texas ordered the statement to be retracted. He then went on radio to state that the whole affair was a simple case of mistaken identity, and that the 'crashed spaceship' was simply a downed weather balloon.

But what of the alien bodies seen by Barnett and the students? And if the recovered object was nothing more than a weather balloon, why did the army go to such efforts to seal off the crash site? And why were witnesses ordered not to talk about what they'd seen and, in the case of Brazel, interrogated for several days? Piecing together the evidence, it would seem that a saucer travelling over Roswell had suffered some sort of severe damage while in the vicinity of Brazel's ranch, and had then crash-landed in the desert where Barnett found it.

There have been several similar accounts of crashed saucers being recovered by the army, many of which include the presence of deceased alien occupants, although the Roswell incident is by far the most well-documented. However, attempts by UFO researchers to find the truth behind these incidents have been consistently hampered by the US government's refusal to release any information about them — or rather, information that's not been so heavily censored that it's virtually useless.

Who Goes There?

Who knows? Despite over four decades of intense study, UFO researchers are no closer to unravelling the mystery of the UFOs now than they ever were. While it's beyond doubt that UFOs really do exist, where they come from and, more importantly, why they come *here* is still unknown. Let's just hope MicroProse's UFO games aren't training for the future...

The name's Erskine. Christina Erskine. And if you've got a technical problem, I've got a not-so-technical solution. That's why they call me...

THE TROUBLE SHOOTER

TROUBLESHOOTER

"Oh God, I'm at my wits' end," cries poor Desperate of Darlington. "Please can you sort out this memory business once and for all? Just tell me an easy way to set up my PC so that I have plenty of expanded — or extended, or whatever — memory for my games and I'll be yours forever."

Sorry, Desperate, but you and I probably aren't destined for long-term bliss. You see, there just isn't one easy way to set up your PC's system memory so that all your games will run without any further tweaking at all.

But surely, if I upgraded my PC so that it had, for example, 16Mb of RAM you could tell me how to make some of it extended, some of it expanded, how to have lots of the base 640K free, and then everything should run okay.

Well, only up to a point, I'm afraid. But look, there are lots of shortcuts and tricks that will certainly help you, and you don't need 16Mb of RAM — 8Mb will do you very nicely (if you have 4Mb it's worth considering an upgrade but you don't have to break the bank just yet).

All right, any help would be welcome. Can we get this extended and expanded business sorted out first?

Sure. Expanded memory and extended memory are two different ways of 'managing' the memory you have installed as SIMM chips in your PC. I'm not going to bore you with the details of how they differ, or how they came into being, but expanded memory was the first one and was designed to work with 286 PCs. Extended came later and works with 386 PCs and upwards.

So why do some programs need one and not the other? And how can I tell before I load up a game?

Most games these days use extended memory. As long as you have the extended memory driver set up in your CONFIG.SYS file, you shouldn't have to do anything else. Games which use expanded memory should say so in the manual, so you can set your machine up accordingly.

And my 'extended memory driver' is..? Er, what exactly?

It's a system file that sits in your DOS directory called HIMEM.SYS. Have a look at your CONFIG.SYS file — you should see the line DEVICE=C:\DOS\HIMEM.SYS. It's a good idea to have it as the very first line, with the expanded memory line immediately below. If you have that line there, then your extended memory driver is loaded, and any games that make use of it should do so.

And that expanded memory thing?

Okay, look in your CONFIG.SYS file again, for a line that reads DEVICE=C:\DOS\EMM386.EXE. Now this time, you may see some numbers or letters after the EMM386.EXE. With expanded memory, you can allocate a certain amount of your memory to be used as expanded (extended just takes the lot and uses whatever it needs). So, you might see DEVICE=C:\DOS\EMM386.EXE 1024, which means you have 1,024 kilobytes, or 1Mb, allocated as expanded memory (the rest, incidentally, will be configured as extended by default, so long as you have that HIMEM.SYS line in there). So now you can see that your expanded memory line ends in 1024, and you try to run a program which wants 2Mb of expanded memory, you'll need to change that line so that it reads DEVICE=C:\DOS\EMM386.EXE 2048.

Well, I've had all sorts of combinations of the two, but I still have problems with some games. In fact, every time, I load a game and I see the words "DOS 4/GW" on-screen I know I'm in for trouble. What is this DOS 4/GW and why does it stop all my games from working?

Oops. DOS 4/GW was actually intended to make things easier, not more difficult! You'll normally get a glitch with DOS 4/GW if you have a 4Mb machine. What this memory management program is looking for is the biggest block of either expanded or extended memory and it uses that for the game in question. If all your memory is configured as extended, or all of it as expanded you should be fine. But if you have, say, DEVICE=C:\DOS\EMM386.EXE 2048, then you have 2Mb of expanded, leaving around 1.5Mb for extended and that isn't enough of either for DOS 4/GW. The quickie solution to this is to go back into CONFIG.SYS and just 'disable' the DEVICE=C:\DOS\EMM386.EXE 2048 line.

What, just get rid of it?

No, don't delete it. Move your cursor down to the beginning of the DEVICE=C:\DOS\EMM386.EXE 2048 line and just type REM at the start — so that it now says REM DEVICE=C:\DOS\EMM386.EXE 2048. REM stands for 'remark' and it tells DOS that this line is just a comment to be ignored, not a command to be loaded. Then restart your machine again, and all should be well.

Well, I think that's the extended/expanded stuff sorted out. But that doesn't help the base memory, does it? How can I get more than 550K free out of 640K when I've got my CD drive, my mouse and everything else loaded?

It's certainly a squeeze. The really slap-happy answer to this is to run MemMaker. MemMaker is a program that's built into versions of DOS 6, and it's dead simple to use. Start at the C:> prompt and type MEMMAKER. Then follow the on-screen prompts for an 'express' set-up. If it asks you if you want to use expanded memory, say no — don't worry, it won't delete your expanded memory line.

So what does MemMaker do?

It will try to give you as much base mem as possible. It'll load as many devices as it can into the upper memory area. This is the block of memory between the 640K you need as your base memory and the first 1Mb, which DOS can use to load device drivers into.

The things to look for in CONFIG.SYS, after MemMaker has done its stuff, is a line saying DOS=HIGH, which means that DOS has loaded into 'high memory', which is the first 64K of extended memory. You'll also notice that where it used to say DEVICE it should now say DEVICEHIGH (and in AUTOEXEC.BAT you'll see lines now starting with LOADHIGH or LH).

So they do. And what's this 'noems' after the EMM386.EXE? What sort of a number is 'noems'?

It's not 'noems', it's NO EMS, or NO EXPANDED MEMORY SYSTEM — and very useful it is too. This little addition to the expanded memory line loads the expanded memory driver (DEVICE=C:\EMM386.EXE) and that makes your upper memory available, but then it doesn't allocate any expanded memory specifically. So you get all the upper memory for devices, but all the extra memory above 1Mb as extended. In fact, I keep my default expanded memory line in CONFIG.SYS with 'noems' at the end because I find that this is how I can get most things to load.

So how much memory can I expect to have free after all this MemMaker-ing?

Depends on what else you've got in CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT. Some drivers take up loads of space, so if after all this you still haven't got over 600K, I'd REM out any line in CONFIG.SYS that begins with the word SHELL, and I'd also REM out the line in AUTOEXEC.BAT that has C:\WINDOWS\SMARTDRV.EXE in it. Windows slows down a bit without it, but at least it's not taking up valuable base memory. Then restart your PC and see where that gets you.

Yes, but how do I know how much memory I've got free until I find my games won't load?

At the C:> prompt, type MEM. This will give you the memory you have free. If you want to see a breakdown of which drivers are taking up space where, type MEM /C. And if you want to see this without it all whizzing past on-screen too fast to read, type MEM /C IMORE. ■

And hey — best of luck!

Another problem eliminated — bag it and tag it, boys. If you've got a problem with your PC that needs a spot of troubleshooting, drop me a line and we'll talk it through. And when I'm not being the TroubleShooter, I've got a day job as editor of PC REVIEW, sister magazine to the very wonderful PC GAMES. PC REVIEW covers the whole gamut of PC entertainment and includes a Technical Help section, in which you can find more detailed versions of the articles which appear in this section.

LETTERS

It's good to talk — especially to us. Send any letters, postcards, drawings or tatty scraps of paper to Dave the Editor at: PC GAMES, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Alternatively, Fax him on: (0171) 972 6700, or go Cyber and e-mail him at: PCREVIEW@CIX.COMPULINK.CO.UK.

CD Shortage!

Dear PC GAMES,

Where are my CD-ROMs? Are you hiding them somewhere? I've been running around town the best part of half a day now, but could I find a copy of PC GAMES CD-ROM Edition? Could I 'eck! Not a sausage! There were plenty of HD Editions though... So, as time went by, and the desperation to read my favourite PC magazine grew, I caved in and — wait for it — bought the floppy version. The same thing happened last month too. What are you guys playing at?

On a happier note, keep up the excellent reviews — you're the best!

Andrew Eikheim,
Hillmorton, Warwickshire.

It's a fair cop, Andrew — we'll come quietly. You see, the truth of the matter is that there never have been any CD-ROM Editions of PC GAMES — we just pretended that they existed to make us look as big and as hard as all the other PC magazines. And we would have got away with it too if it hadn't been for you meddling kids...

But seriously Andrew, we're surprised that you're having such problems getting your hands on our delicious, delectable and delovely CD. True, not every tiny cornershop will have PC GAMES CD-ROM Edition, but if you have a local W.H.Smith or John Menzies then you shouldn't have any problems at all. If all else fails, why not order PC GAMES from your local newsagent using the handy note provided on page 98?

Tube-tastic!

Dear PC GAMES,

I've never written in to a computer mag before, but I felt I had to break the habit of a lifetime just to say a big 'Thank you' for the Tube game which you gave away with your Feb '95 issue. It's absolutely brilliant — if a little short! — and definitely one of the best coverdisc games I've ever played. Are you planning to do more of this sort of thing in the future?

Mark Havers,
Basildon, Essex.

Glad to hear you liked Tube, Mark. It was rather special, wasn't it? But before you send us pressies, don't forget about those brilliant guys and gals at Bullfrog — without them, Tube would never have happened. As to whether we're planning to more of this sort of thing in the future... Well, we wouldn't like to let the cat out of the bag too soon, but suffice it to say: Watch This Space...

STARLETTER

Have Origin Gone *Mad?*

Dear PC GAMES,

Just what are Origin up to? One month they release the most incredible state-of-the-art 'interactive movie' ever created (that's Wing Commander 3, in case you hadn't guessed), and the next they follow it up with Wings Of Glory, a game which appears to be little more than that 'oldy' Strike Commander but with prop planes and stiff upper lips.

Surely each release from a software developer of Origin's calibre should be trying to push the PC's technological limits, not just recovering old ground again? I mean, what's next? Ultima IX using the original Ultima game engine written in the early 80s?

Simon Nuffield,
Tottenham, London.

Agreed, Simon. On a purely aesthetic level Wings Of Glory does seem to be something of a 'backwards step' after Wing Commander 3, but then Wings Of Glory didn't cost over $4 million dollars to make. And just because Wings Of Glory doesn't feature top Hollywood actors going through their paces against blue-screened backdrops and come squeezed onto four CDs, that doesn't necessarily mean it's a bad game.

If it's revolutionary games you're after, Origin are due to release the long-awaited BioForge in the very near future. Best described as a futuristic Alone In The Dark, the game features some spectacular texture-mapped graphics and some *extremely* clever puzzles. Hopefully we'll get a reviewable version of BioForge in for next month's issue.

Wing *Whinger*

Dear Dave the Editor,

I'm writing in about your recent review of Wing Commander 3. I'm a big fan of the Wing Commander series, and snatched my dealer's hand off when WC3 appeared at my local software store. After playing the game for the first time I had to pick myself up off the floor — it's outstanding. I love this game to death, but like yourselves I don't have a Pentium — in fact, I have a 33MHz 486DX, with a double-speed CD-ROM drive and 8Mb of RAM.

And it's regarding your comments about the game's speed on low-end PCs that I'm writing in about. In your review you complained that on a 33MHz 486DX2 the game suffered from slow spaceflight, lengthy loading times, etc. This is not the case on my machine. The transition period as you move between decks and conversations is a mere 15-20 seconds (not 30 seconds as you say), and the mission loading times vary between 2 minutes 45 seconds and 3 minutes 30 seconds — nowhere near your claimed 7 minutes!

Also, you say that the combat is slow and jerky, especially when there's more than one fighter on-screen. I found this simply not to be the case — the screen only jerks when there are capital ships on-screen.

If I had read your review of Wing 3 before buying the game, I can honestly say I wouldn't have bought it. I can only assume that you have a problem with your PC and suggest that you get an engineer to look it over — or that you buy another stopwatch as your current one must be broken!

Lee Wilson,
Ashford, Kent.

Lee, first let me assure you that both my stopwatch AND my trusty PC are in full working order. The loading times I endured while playing Wing 3 were more or less the same as those suffered by other people in the office who tried running the game on their 33MHz 486s, including our learned colleagues on PC Review. I have no idea why Wing 3 runs as well as it does on your PC — have any other readers had similarly pleasant surprises?

And one last thing — while I agree that having to wait three minutes for the missions to load is better than having to wait seven minutes, it still seems like a bloody long time to me!

Tips In **Time**

Dear PC GAMES,

For some reason I had never picked up PC GAMES before the March 1995 issue [shame on you! — Dave], and I was pleased to discover that it thoroughly satisfied my PC gaming magazine addiction. I especially enjoyed the Power Up! section as it included tips to recently-released games, whereas other mags seem to take months to supply the same information. I thought it was a PC gamer's dream manual [I say, steady on old chap! — Dave].

So why am I writing you this letter, filled out with a few 'pats on the back'? Well... Unfortunately, I have one small but constructive criticism of your mag. Seeing as I own both Little Big Adventure and System Shock, I was hoping to get my hands on a few back issues so that I could refer to earlier parts of your excellent walk-through solutions. But when I searched through your publication for back issue information none could be found!

Please help satisfy my insatiable thirst for PC gaming knowledge and tell me how to get hold of the last few issues of your mag!

Troy Wilson,
Goring, Oxon.

You're not the first person we've had writing in about back issues, Troy. You (and everybody else who's written in) will no doubt be pleased to see that there's full info about how to order past editions of PC GAMES on page 76.

Several people have also enquired about subscriptions. We're currently working on a new offer, which should see the light of day soon.

Heretic Hoo-Haa?

Dear PC GAMES,

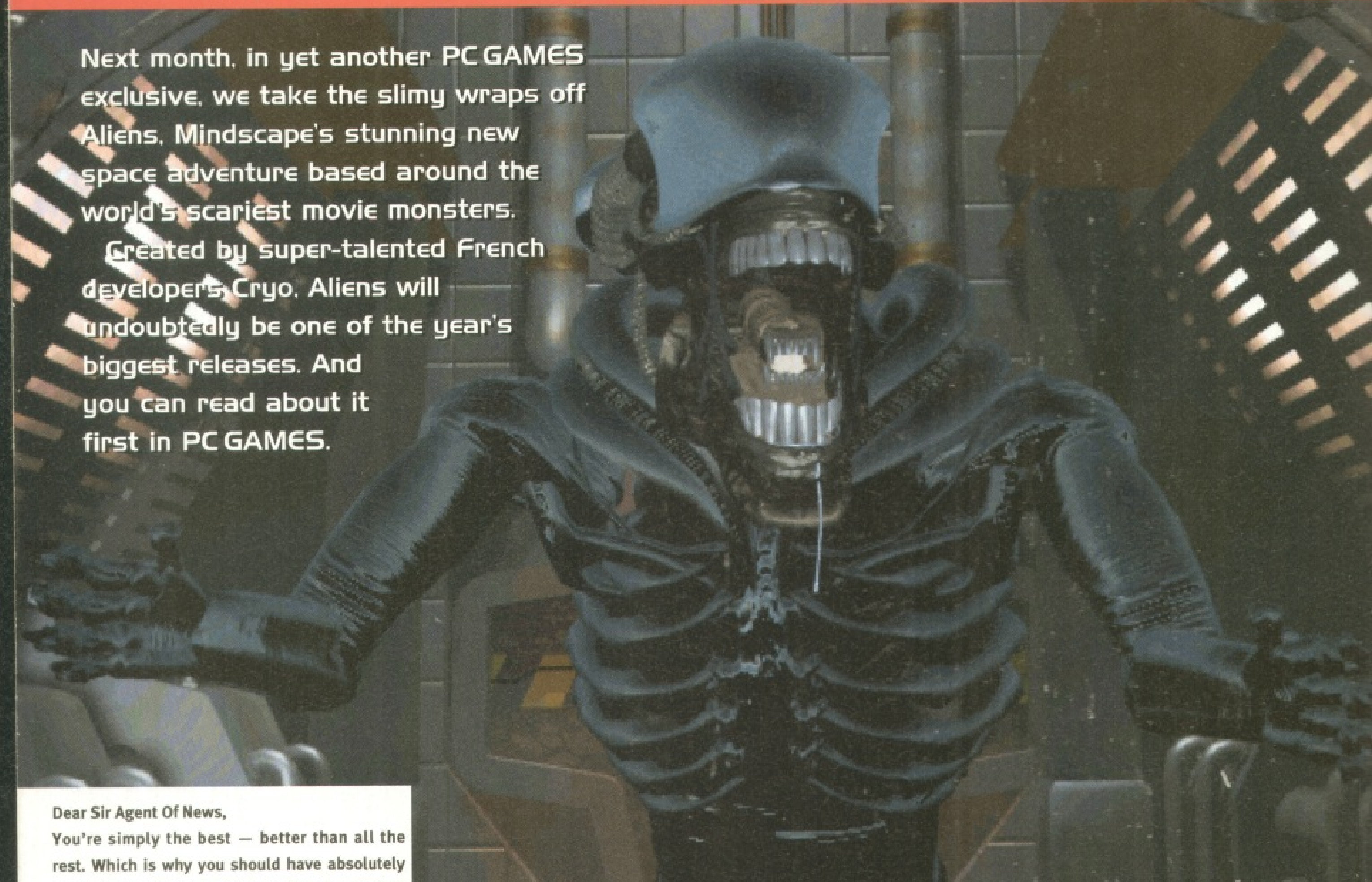
Why did you make such a big fuss about Heretic? I mean, you put it on the cover and gave it a four-page review, but it's only Shareware at the end of the day! Surely it should've been reviewed in the 'Yours... For Less Than A Fiver' section?

David Jenkins,
Aldermaston, Berks.

Yup, Heretic is 'only' Shareware — but then, so was Doom. And as Heretic marked the appearance of an 'enhanced' 3D engine and was produced by Raven Software in collaboration with Id Software themselves, we thought it was a game worth making a song and dance about. Fair enough? And besides, it's brilliant...

NEXT MONTH

HISSSSSS!



Next month, in yet another PC GAMES exclusive, we take the slimy wraps off Aliens, Mindscape's stunning new space adventure based around the world's scariest movie monsters.

Created by super-talented French developers Cryo, Aliens will undoubtedly be one of the year's biggest releases. And you can read about it first in PC GAMES.

Dear Sir Agent Of News,

You're simply the best — better than all the rest. Which is why you should have absolutely no problems reserving next month's issue of PC GAMES for me.

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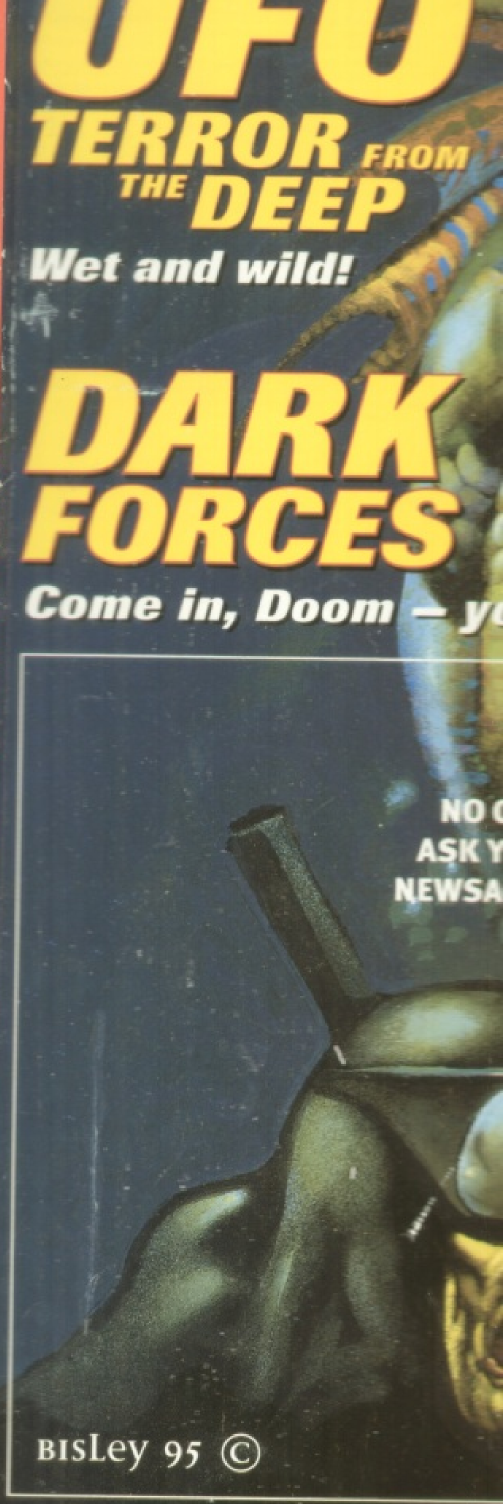

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